



From the makers of Doctor Who

# THE Sarah Jane ADVENTURES

From the makers of Doctor Who Series created by Russell T Davies

# The Nightmare Man

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#### **Contents**

Prologue: 'I'm watching...'

**Chapter One: The nightmare begins** 

<u>Chapter Two: Falling apart</u> <u>Chapter Three: Surprise!</u>

**Chapter Four: Secrets and lies** 

**Chapter Five: Tuesday** 

Chapter Six: The Nightmare Man is waiting...

<u>Chapter Seven: Wednesday</u> <u>Chapter Eight: Party of terror!</u> <u>Chapter Nine: Time for bed...</u>

**Chapter Ten: Thursday** 

<u>Chapter Eleven: Luke's message</u> <u>Chapter Twelve: Terror at night</u>

**Chapter Thirteen: A world of nightmares** 

**Chapter Fourteen: Trapped!** 

<u>Chapter Fifteen: The longest night</u> <u>Chapter Sixteen: Alone in the attic</u>

Chapter Seventeen: A new day

Epilogue: Somewhere else...

#### **Prologue**

## 'I'm watching...'

Every night, across the world, people go to sleep and they dream. They dream about their hopes and their fears. They dream about their friends and their families. Sometimes their dreams are big, huge, exciting adventures. But, sometimes they're dark and they're scary.

'I'm watching you...'

You know those dreams. The ones where you wake up, terrified, your heart pounding in your chest.

Those dreams, they're the nightmares. And they're the ones he enjoys the most. The dreams where you're running and running but you know you can't escape.

Well, next time you have one of those nightmares, just have a look behind you. Go on, try it. Try and turn around and see if he's there. His cold, pale hand reaching for you, ready to run his fingers up your back. His lullaby whispering in your ear.

'I'm waiting for you...'

He's trapped in that strange dimension where nightmares take place. He feeds on our terror and fear. He's

called the Nightmare Man and we should all be grateful that he's trapped. Locked away in another dimension. Because if he ever got free, the whole world would belong to him. All of us, asleep forever. Lost in our never-ending nightmares...

'I'm coming for you...'

#### **Chapter One**

## The nightmare begins

Luke Smith woke up to the sound of the radio on his alarm clock. It was Monday morning, but he didn't have to go to school. Not any more. He stared up at the ceiling, listening to the local DJ talk about the weather and the traffic jams and house prices. But he wasn't really listening. He was thinking.

'I'll only wake up in this room four more times,' he muttered to himself. He looked around his bedroom. The familiar wallpaper. The pictures of his friends. His CDs, his computer, his chess set. The teddy bear he was too old for. It was his bedroom and he knew every inch of it. He'd woken up to the same ceiling nearly every day of his life. But all that was about to change.

Because Luke Smith was going to university. At the end of the week, he was leaving home. He took a deep breath and threw back his quilt. He climbed out of bed and walked over to the window. Pulling back the curtain, he looked out at the familiar view of Bannerman Road. Across the road, Rani Chandra, one of his best friends, was shutting her front door. She saw him looking down at her and she waved. He waved back and she grinned before striding off down the road.

Luke let the curtain fall back and he walked over to a mirror. He stared at his reflection. He looked like a normal human boy, but he wasn't. He'd been created a few years ago by some alien invaders called the Bane. They'd scanned thousands of men, women and children and had created Luke as the perfect human being. This meant he was incredibly clever.

When he'd been rescued and adopted by his mum, she'd sent him to the local school. Luke was always top of his class but sometimes it was difficult. Other children didn't understand how he could be so clever and some of them thought he didn't have to work hard. But Luke worked really hard and that was why now, this week, he was leaving home and going to university. All the other children he knew wouldn't be taking their A-levels until next year, but Luke had already passed his. Which is why he'd only be standing in this room for another four days. After that, his whole life would change.

He looked at his reflection and grinned. He was really excited. It was going to be a big, new adventure for him. But he was also scared. He was scared of leaving his friends and his mum and everything he knew. This time next week he'd be living somewhere else with new people, waking up in a new bedroom with a different ceiling. Feeling a little sad, Luke turned away from the mirror and left his bedroom.

Upstairs, at the top of 13 Bannerman Road, was a huge attic. It was an almost magical place. Sunlight shone through stained glass windows and there were strange objects stuffed on to shelves and into every nook and cranny. Some of those strange objects were strange alien objects. This was because Luke's mum, Sarah Jane Smith, helped aliens who crashed on Earth to get home. She also stopped lots of other aliens invading. Hardly anyone knew about what she did. Most people thought she was just Luke's slightly weird mum. But she was so much more than that.

As Luke pushed open the attic door, he thought about how he'd be leaving all that behind as well. No more aliens. No more adventures. He stepped into the attic and looked over at his mum. She was talking to what looked like a huge alien supercomputer in the wall. It looked like a huge alien supercomputer because it was a huge alien supercomputer. It was called Mr Smith.

'Good morning, Luke,' said Mr Smith as Luke entered.

Sarah Jane turned to look at her son. 'I was just going to call you. I thought we'd have scrambled eggs.'

'I guess I should watch,' Luke replied. 'This time next week, I'll be making my own breakfast.'

Sarah Jane smiled at him but as she turned away, her smile fell. She was going to miss her son so much, but she was trying to be brave for him. She wanted him to go and have the best life ever and she was scared that if he knew how upset she was, he might not go. Luke told her that he'd seen Rani from his bedroom window.

'Oh, it's their first day back at school, isn't it?' Sarah Jane replied. 'It must seem strange not being with them.'

Luke nodded. 'Mum, have I made the right choice?'

'Of course you have,' said Sarah Jane, rushing over to him. 'Remember your first day at school? You were terrified, but that turned out all right.'

Luke thought back to his first day at school. His headmaster had turned out to be a Slitheen! The Slitheen were huge, tall and green with terrifying claws. They'd wanted to destroy Earth. Luke reminded his mum about this. They both smiled. Their lives were quite mad.

'Listen, Luke, you're allowed to be worried,' Sarah Jane said, taking his hand. 'You're only human.'

Luke nodded, blinking back tears. He didn't want his mum to be worried or upset about him so he was trying to be brave. He forced a smile.

'Are you really going to do scrambled eggs? Do you remember what happened last time?'

They were both laughing as they left the attic. But they were both feeling sad as well. They really would miss each other.

## **Chapter Two**

## Falling apart

Rani Chandra was walking to school and she was thinking about how much she was going to miss Luke. He'd been the first friend she'd made when her family had moved to Ealing a few years before. Since then, they'd helped Sarah Jane stop lots of alien invasions. She knew those adventures would carry on, but she also knew it wouldn't be the same without Luke.

A very loud, very annoying ringtone interrupted her thoughts and she stopped and looked at the other member of their gang, Clyde Langer. He was looking at a text on his phone. He smiled and read it out loud.

'Mum just set the kitchen on fire. Again. You coming round tonight?'

Rani smiled back. 'From Luke?'

Sarah Jane Smith may have been a brilliant journalist and she may have saved Earth from being destroyed loads of times, but the children knew that she was a terrible cook.

Clyde put the phone back in his pocket and they continued walking. Rani asked him if he was going to reply to Luke's text.

'He should be here!' Clyde said, shaking his head. 'He should be here, boring us with facts about dead kings and space and dinosaurs.'

Rani smiled back gently. She knew that Clyde would miss Luke more than anyone. He and Luke were so different – Luke never got into trouble at school, whereas Clyde loved messing about. Luke liked maths and science, but Clyde loved football and art. Despite this, they were the very best of friends. Clyde, being a typical boy though, didn't like to show his feelings.

'Four days, then that's it. No more Luke,' he muttered.

Rani waved her mobile at him, reminding him they'd be able to talk to Luke every day if they wanted to. 'And he'll be home for holidays and Christmas.'

Clyde didn't answer.

'So,' asked Rani, carefully, 'are you going to see him later?' Clyde shook his head. 'When my dad left home, he just went. Disappeared overnight. Luke needs to get used to us not being around.'

Clyde's dad had walked out of his life when he was much younger. He'd gone to Germany, leaving Clyde and his mum to look after themselves. Ever since then, Clyde had found it hard to deal with people leaving – although he'd never admit it, of course!

Rani knew that Clyde was upset, but she also knew that the boys would sort it all out eventually. So, saying nothing, she took Clyde's hand and led him through the school gates.

In his bedroom, Luke had started to pack. He was taking pictures off the wall and was looking at one of him and Clyde. He'd texted his friend earlier but there'd been no reply. Was Clyde already forgetting about him?

Luke's thoughts were interrupted by a loud commotion as his mum burst into the bedroom, struggling under some huge cardboard boxes. She was laughing as she put them down.

'How are you getting on?' she asked him.

Before he could answer, she walked over to his wardrobe and started taking out clothes. Luke put the picture of him and Clyde back down and watched his mum. She was like a whirlwind of energy, throwing his clothes on to his bed.

'I was thinking we should get you some new clothes,' said Sarah Jane. 'I don't know what's 'in', but Rani can help. We'll get you looking all cool. Is cool the right word? Is "cool" cool?'

She grinned at Luke and he nodded.

Sarah Jane could see that he was quiet and so she went over to him. She looked at the photograph of him and Clyde.

'Did he call you back?'

Luke shook his head.

'He's probably just sad.' Then suddenly she smiled again. 'I know what will cheer you up!'

And with that, she skipped out of the room. Luke followed, frowning. He didn't think anything could cheer him up.

#### **Chapter Three**

## Surprise!

As Luke left the house, his mum suddenly appeared behind him. She put her hands around his face, covering his eyes.

'Mum?'

Despite everything, he couldn't help smiling. Sarah Jane was sometimes more like a kid than a mum. She'd spent so many years being lonely, but he and their friends had changed that. He hoped she'd be okay after he left. Unable to see, he let her lead him through another door.

'Ready?' she asked.

Luke nodded and Sarah Jane removed her hands. Luke blinked in the sunlight and realised where he was. They were in Sarah Jane's garage and there, in front of them, was her old car. A bright yellow Beetle! He looked at it, confused. Sarah Jane took his hand and placed a set of keys in it.

'You're giving it to me?'

'I've had it done up,' Sarah Jane replied, with a huge grin. 'MOT, everything! You don't want your mum driving you to uni. Go on, get in! See how it feels!'

And with that, she opened the door and practically pushed him into the driver's seat. Luke sat, staring straight ahead. He'd passed his driving test a few weeks ago but he felt strange sitting there. It wasn't that he was scared of driving. He didn't know what it was.

Luke glanced up at his mum smiling down at him and he thought back to her packing his clothes. He thought back to the night before when she'd been saying he should get Clyde's mum to teach him how to cook. He thought back to how she was always smiling. He thought back to how she kept saying how proud she was of him and how exciting his new life was going to be. He looked up at her grinning down at him, then he looked at the car keys she'd put in his hand.

'Why don't I just drive off now?' he found himself saying. It was as much a surprise to him as it was to Sarah Jane.

There was a pause. His mum's smile fell.

'What?' she asked, quietly.

'Are you even going to miss me?'

As Luke said the words, he knew that that was what was scaring him. It was like his mum actually wanted him to leave home. And now she'd given him the car, and he knew he should be grateful, but it really was like she wanted him to go. It was like she couldn't wait for him to leave!

Sarah Jane carefully walked around the car and climbed into the passenger seat. She didn't look at Luke but he could see that there were tears in her eyes. He was so confused by everything but, more than anything, he hated seeing his mum cry.

'Oh, Luke.' Her voice was nearly a whisper. 'For years, I was alone. Just me and K-9. You gave me my life back, you gave me something real to live for and I'm terrified of what's going to happen when you go.' She paused. 'I'm so scared.'

Luke hadn't been expecting that. 'Why?'

'Because it feels like I'm losing you.'

Luke suddenly understood. His mum was as confused as he was! They should be excited about him leaving and they weren't excited. He was going to university in Oxford! He was going to have the time of his life! But he was leaving home and that was really sad and really scary. No wonder they were both confused about how to feel.

'Everything's changing so fast,' said Luke.

Sarah Jane nodded. Then she turned to him and smiled. 'But whatever happens, this is your home.'

Luke nodded. He wanted to answer, but he could feel tears in his eyes. He didn't want to cry because he didn't want to upset his mum even more.

'Your friends are here,' Sarah Jane continued. 'And I'm here. And I'll always be here and...' And then she stopped as she started to cry. 'Of course I'm going to miss you!'

Luke reached over and hugged his mum. He'd been so scared that his mum wasn't going to miss him. But now he knew the truth.

#### **Chapter Four**

#### Secrets and lies

That night, Luke was lying in bed. He felt a bit better after his conversation with his mum, but he was still scared. He stared up at the ceiling, imagining patterns in the paint. For the briefest second, he imagined he saw a face. But then he felt his eyes close and...

Suddenly there was the sound of laughter! It was his mum! Luke climbed out of bed and left his bedroom.

Moonlight shone through the hallway windows, making the house seem cold and dark. At the bottom of the stairs, Luke could see light shining out from the living room. And he could hear his mum laughing. He started to creep down the stairs, wondering who she was talking to.

'Oh, I shouldn't laugh,' Sarah Jane's voice echoed up the stairs. 'And the thing is, I'll miss him. A bit. But he's not really my son.'

Luke stopped, completely stunned. He'd never heard his mum say anything like that before. She'd always insisted that he *was* her son! As he listened, a tinny, robotic voice sounded. It was K-9, their robot dog.

'Master Luke was created by the Bane.'

Luke started to creep down the stairs again. One step. Then another. He knew he must have misheard what his mum said. She was his mum and she loved him. She'd told him in the car how much she was going to miss him.

'And yeah, he's good for doing the crossword and emptying the bins.' Sarah Jane's voice continued echoing up

the stairs. 'But he was going on earlier, K-9. "Will you miss me?" And I was thinking, for goodness' sake, grow up. You know what? Actually, I'm not going to miss you – I don't really like you. But once you started living here, I was stuck with you.'

Luke felt his heart beating faster and faster. He wanted to scream out, or cry, or do something. Anything. But all he could do was listen. How could his mum be saying this? Why would she say it?

'He will be gone soon,' said K-9.

'Oh, K-9, I can't wait,' replied Sarah Jane. 'Luke was the biggest mistake of my life!'

Luke stared though the open door at his mum. He couldn't believe what he was hearing! He loved her and he thought she loved him. He was about to step into the living room when suddenly he felt something moving up his back! He spun around and caught a glimpse of a white hand, gleaming in the moonlight. He screamed and...

He woke up.

He was in bed. His breathing slowed down as he recovered. It had just been a dream. A nightmare. But this scared Luke even more, because he didn't have nightmares. He'd never been able to dream. But now, even that was changing. He lay in bed and stared up the ceiling. He didn't go back to sleep.

#### **Chapter Five**

## Tuesday

The next morning, Luke left his bedroom and went into the hallway. The house felt so different in the daylight. Everything was brighter and, although he was tired, Luke felt fine. Everything was going to be okay.

'Oh, he's still in bed. You know what he's like!'

It was Sarah Jane and she was talking to someone. Luke's heart started beating faster again. Who was she talking to? What did she really think about him? Then he forced himself to calm down. It had just been a nightmare. It was nothing to be scared about.

As he walked down the stairs, he saw that his mum was talking to Rani. They both grinned at him as he joined them.

'Rani's given me some tips on what clothes we should get you,' said Sarah Jane. 'Oh, I've forgotten my handbag!'

As Sarah Jane rushed off, Luke yawned. Rani smiled at him.

'You'll catch flies if you keep yawning like that.'

He smiled back, but Rani could see that something was bothering him. 'Are you all right?' she asked.

'I had a nightmare last night,' Luke replied.

'What?' said Rani. 'I thought you couldn't dream.'

'So did I. The Bane didn't include that in my genetic make-up.'

Rani asked him if he'd told Sarah Jane but Luke shook his head. He didn't want to worry his mum about something so silly. 'It's just a dream,' he said. 'Everyone has them, don't they?'

'I suppose it must be because you're leaving home,' said Rani, nodding. 'You know, everything's a bit intense and that's just...activated the dream switch. You're growing up, getting old.' She grinned and Luke smiled back, raising an eyebrow.

'I'm growing up so I start having nightmares? Great.'

'And the rest of us get spots,' said Rani, rolling her eyes. 'I wouldn't worry about it. Oh, you've not told Clyde, have you? He'll only take the mick.'

Luke shook his head. 'I haven't seen him. He's been busy.'

Rani nodded and smiled but she knew the real reason Clyde hadn't seen Luke. Rani also knew that she'd have to do something about it.

#### 'Clyde! Hold up!'

Clyde turned to Rani at the other end of the school corridor. She pushed through a group of giggling schoolgirls and joined him outside a classroom.

'I saw Luke this morning,' she said.

Clyde shrugged.

'He said he hasn't see you in a few days,' she continued. 'You fancy going round later?'

Clyde shook his head. 'I've got football.'

'Oh, don't be like this.'

Clyde shrugged again. 'Like what?'

'Your best mate's leaving on Friday. Don't pretend you're not bothered.'

Suddenly, Clyde looked angry. 'What am I meant to do? Start crying? Beg him to stay?'

Rani could see just how upset he was about Luke leaving but she knew he'd hate himself if he didn't say goodbye properly. 'We should be happy for him!' she said.

'I am!' he replied.

'Well, tell him that!'

'Well, maybe I will!'

'Good!'

There was a pause. They looked at each other. They weren't used to arguing, so they weren't quite sure what to do next. After what felt like hours, Clyde nodded towards the classroom door.

'I kind of need to be in there,' he said.

'Oh, right, yeah,' she replied.

And they went their separate ways.

Later that afternoon, Clyde sat alone on the school wall. He was looking at his phone. He wanted to call Luke, he really did. He knew he was being stupid. Luke going to university was a brilliant thing, but Clyde was just so scared of being left behind. What if Luke forgot about him? What if he decided that Clyde wasn't clever enough to stay friends with?

When he'd been younger, Clyde had had these "Cool Rules" which he'd taught Luke. One of them had been how you shouldn't show people when you're really happy or really upset. If people saw those things, then you wouldn't be cool. Now he was older, Clyde knew those rules were a bit silly. He wanted to show Luke that he was happy for him, but also that he'd miss him. But he didn't want to have some big heart-to-heart chat. That wasn't Clyde. That wasn't what he did.

Then he realised! He realised what it was he did do. How he could show Luke how he felt. Clyde jumped off the wall and started to run home. He had things to organise!

#### **Chapter Six**

## The Nightmare Man is waiting...

That evening, Luke said goodnight to Sarah Jane and went to bed early. He was still tired from not sleeping well the night before and he'd had a busy day of packing and clothes shopping. In fact, he was exhausted, so he fell asleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow...

And he found himself standing in front of a pair of red doors. They were just like the ones at school and he could hear the sound of children laughing on the other side. He pushed through them and stepped into a corridor. It was like someone had taken one of the corridors from his school and twisted it all up. It was weird and wrong. The walls were grey and cold. There were a few blood-red doors but no windows. Luke knew wherever he was, it wasn't a good place. But he was brave and he wanted to know more. So he started walking...

'Lukey-boy! What are you doing here?'

Luke turned around to see that Clyde was suddenly walking behind him. Behind them, one of the red doors was open. Luke wanted to stop and talk to Clyde but it was like someone had taken control of his legs. He kept walking, with Clyde following.

'Thought you were the big man!' continued Clyde. 'Off to university!'

Luke was about to answer when another of the red doors opened and Rani stepped into the corridor. She joined Luke and Clyde and they kept walking.

'It's not fair really, is it?' she said.

'What isn't?' asked Luke, confused.

'You!' Rani's voice was suddenly full of hatred. 'Your brain's not normal.'

'Aw,' Clyde was laughing. It was a cruel sound. 'Is Rani jealous?'

'I'm working so hard to get out of here and he does it all a year early,' she continued. 'It's just showing off.'

By now, Luke had realised that this was another nightmare. Rani and Clyde were saying things that he was sure they didn't mean. Just like his mum had done before. But he couldn't stop himself arguing back.

'That isn't how it is!' he said. He wanted to stop walking. He wanted to stop all of it. But Rani and Clyde carried on...

'You act like, "oh, I'm so sweet and I'm so scared", but you're just a freak!' Rani spat out the words.

'Super geek!' snarled Clyde.

'Alien freak!' Rani stared at Luke, full of hatred.

Luke was desperate to stop this. He wanted to run away. He wanted to wake up. He wanted it to stop. But it only got worse as, suddenly, another door opened.

'Ooh,' said his mum, joining them. 'Did someone say aliens?'

'It's okay, Sarah Jane,' said Clyde. 'We'll still be here.'

'Yeah,' said Rani. 'We'll help you to stop the aliens.'

'I'll be coming back!' exclaimed Luke.

'Who says we'll want you back?' Clyde said the words quietly, but it was like he'd screamed them into Luke's face.

Luke's fears that they would forget about him, that they didn't really like him, that they couldn't wait for him to go, that they did think he was a freak...all his fears were happening. They were coming true. Devastated, he managed to stop walking and he turned to look at them. They just grinned back, enjoying his fear and upset.

'Luke...' whispered a voice. It was evil. The voice was actually evil. You could tell from just the one word that the

voice belonged to something dark.

Luke turned away from the others and their mocking smiles and he watched as another of the blood-red doors opened. On the other side was a black void. There was nothing there. No light. Just darkness.

Luke tried to sound brave. 'Who's there?'

'I'm coming for you...' the voice whispered.

'Who are you?' shouted Luke. 'Where am I?'

Rani's voice suddenly sounded in his ear. 'It's just a dream, you big kid.'

Luke clenched his fists, desperately trying not to give in. 'I know this isn't real, but it isn't just a dream. It can't be!'

'Poor little Lukey...' the voice continued.

It was mocking him. Using words that bullies had thrown at Luke over the years. Bullies he'd stood up to.

'Who are you?' he demanded.

'I live in your nightmares. I feed on them. Oh, and yours are just beautiful.'

Luke stared through the open doorway as a hand slowly reached through. It was pale and white and, like the corridor, it looked wrong. It felt wrong. A shiver ran down Luke's spine and, as he watched, the hand moved back into the void before reappearing – this time holding a blood-red flower.

Luke started to really panic and he turned back to beg the others for help, but they'd gone. As he started to call out for them, the three doors they'd come through slammed shut.

Luke turned back to the open door. The hand pulled back into the darkness and disappeared. Suddenly, with a loud bang, that door slammed shut as well. Then, slowly, a white, demonic face began to appear in the door's red paintwork and Luke screamed and...

He woke up.

He quickly reached over and switched on his bedside lamp. And, staring up at the ceiling, Luke waited for the morning.

#### **Chapter Seven**

## Wednesday

Sarah Jane was sitting in the attic, reading a copy of the local paper. And, sitting next to her, so was K-9.

'Can I turn the page?' she asked her robot dog.

'Affirmative,' he replied. So she turned the page.

As they continued to read, Sarah Jane noticed Luke standing in the doorway.

'Morning,' she said. 'How long have you been standing there?'

He smiled weakly at her and she suddenly noticed how pale and tired he looked. He looked sick, but Luke didn't get sick. She jumped up and put her hands on his arms.

'What is it, Luke?'

'I didn't get much sleep,' he said quietly. 'I had a nightmare.'

Panic immediately flashed across Sarah Jane's face.

'I had one on Monday night as well,' Luke continued.

Sarah Jane sprung into life, striding back into the room and standing in front of one of the walls.

'Mr Smith, I need you!'

A fanfare sounded and smoke filled the room, as the wall opened and Mr Smith appeared. While this was happening, Luke moved into the room, joining his mum.

'Mum,' he said. 'I'm sure it's nothing. I'm just a bit scared about Friday.'

'How can I help you, Sarah Jane?' asked Mr Smith.

'Scan Luke,' she replied. 'He's been having dreams.'

Mr Smith knew how serious that was. 'I thought Luke didn't dream!'

'That's why I'm asking you to scan him,' replied Sarah Jane with a sigh.

'Do you require everything to be pointed out to you, Mr Smith?' asked K-9 with a superior tone.

The two alien computers didn't get on, but now really wasn't the time for their silliness. Sarah Jane glared down at K-9 and he lowered his head.

A beam of light shot out of Mr Smith and started to scan Luke. A computer image of the boy appeared on Mr Smith's screen.

'Luke's anxiety levels are increased, which is to be expected, but I can't detect any abnormalities.'

'So, I'm fine?' asked Luke.

'Perhaps I should get someone else to look you over?' said Sarah Jane, taking his hand.

She wasn't sure who she would ask. They'd always kept Luke away from doctors in case they worked out that he'd been made by aliens. She had a friend who called himself the Doctor, but he could be on the other side of the galaxy for all she knew. She wasn't even sure if he was alive. The last time she'd seen him, there'd been something wrong. It had been as if he knew something bad was going to happen.

She had another friend who was a doctor. Martha Smith-Jones had also travelled with the Doctor at one point and she and Sarah Jane occasionally met up for coffee. Martha knew all about Luke and all about aliens. Sarah Jane pulled out her mobile, ready to call her, when Luke reached out and stopped her.

'Mum, I'm fine. Mr Smith says I'm fine.' He grinned. 'I'm a big boy now.'

Sarah Jane looked at him. Was she over-reacting? Mr Smith had said that Luke was fine. And Luke was saying that he was fine. And if she trusted him to leave home and go off to university, then perhaps she should trust him with this.

'I'm sorry,' she said before grinning. 'Oh, how am I going to cope when you're gone? I'm going to be calling you...' She trailed off as Luke's phone beeped and he checked his messages. 'I'll just talk to myself,' she muttered.

Luke's face broke into a big grin. 'It's from Clyde. He wants us to meet up!'

'What, now?' asked Sarah Jane.

Luke started walking to the door. 'This afternoon, at school.'

Sarah Jane called over to him. 'Make sure you do some packing before...'

But before she could finish, Luke had left the attic. Sarah Jane smiled and relaxed. Luke had forgotten about his nightmares and things seemed to be returning to normal.

That afternoon, Luke walked into his old school playground. He looked up at Park Vale School and smiled. He'd enjoyed his time there so much.

He pushed open the doors and walked down a number of corridors. He could hear the sounds of lessons taking place behind closed doors. He pushed through another door that led through to the Sixth Form building. Walking down a final corridor, he suddenly had a strange sense of déjà vu. A corridor with grey walls and red doors. He remembered his nightmare and shuddered.

Then he forced himself to stop being silly. That had just been a nightmare. This was the real world and, in the real world, Clyde wanted to see him.

He walked to the end of the corridor where there were two big red doors. Above them, a sign read, "Sixth Form Common Room". Luke pushed the doors open and was surprised to find the room in darkness. Again, he remembered the nightmare. The black void. The man with the white hand and red flower.

'Hello?' he asked, trying not to sound nervous.

'Surprise!' screamed a load of voices as, suddenly, all the lights in the room were switched on!

Luke struggled to take it all in. There were multicoloured flashing disco lights. There was a huge banner with the words "Goodbye Luke!" painted on it. There was a table, covered in cake and fizzy drinks and chocolate and all his favourite food. And there, underneath the banner, were all of Luke's schoolfriends. Jacob, Lance, Dave, Tony, Julie, Jade, Meena...and, of course, at the front, his two best friends – Clyde and Rani. They all popped party poppers in his direction! He stared, not knowing what to say. He couldn't believe that they'd thrown a surprise party for him! Clyde came over to join him.

'Did you do this?' Luke asked.

'You're my best mate,' replied Clyde. 'As if I'd let you go without a party!' Then he turned to face the others. 'You hear me? It's time to party!'

They all cheered! And Luke smiled. This was quite simply the best thing that had ever happened to him.

# **Chapter Eight**

## Party of terror!

Luke was reading a card full of messages wishing him good luck. He still couldn't believe it. He looked up and around the room at all his friends. They were dancing and eating and chatting and smiling. It made Luke realise how lucky he was to have such good friends.

He'd been made to help destroy the human race and, when he had started school, he hadn't known how to act amongst others. People had thought he was weird. Over time, though, with lots of help from Clyde, he had learnt to relax and enjoy himself. He was never ashamed of being clever or different but he knew that if he wasn't careful, sometimes it looked as if he was showing off. So, thanks to Clyde, he'd made many friends.

Luke put the card down and went over to the table of food. He was putting some sausage rolls onto a paper plate when a voice sounded behind him.

'So,' asked Clyde. 'Are you all right?'

Luke turned to face his friend. They were both feeling slightly awkward. It had been a couple of days since they'd even spoken to each other.

'Yeah,' Luke nodded. 'I'm all right.'

'Okay. Good.' Clyde took a deep breath. 'It's just...I'm no good at this sort of thing.'

'Me neither.'

'So, we're cool?' asked Clyde.

'We're always cool,' Luke replied.

'Cool. And...' Clyde paused. 'You don't want, like, a hug or anything?'

Luke laughed and shook his head. 'So, was all this your idea?'

Clyde nodded. 'With a bit of a nudge from you-know-who.'

He nodded over to the dance floor where Rani was having the time of her life.

'She's pretty cool, isn't she?' said Luke.

'Yeah,' Clyde replied.

'You should go and dance with her.'

Clyde almost jumped out of his skin. 'What? What's that supposed to mean? Why would I want to dance with Rani? I don't want to dance with...'

'Rani!' Luke interrupted him, calling out to their other friend. 'Clyde wants to show you his moves!'

Rani grinned at them both and waved Clyde over. Shooting evils at Luke, Clyde went over and started to dance with Rani. Luke grinned and watched his two best friends for a while. Then he collected his plate of food and sat down.

As he started to eat, Luke found himself yawning. For a second, he remembered why he was so tired. He remembered the nightmares that had kept him awake. Then he stopped thinking about them and just enjoyed watching all his friends. And the lights. All the coloured lights. All the pretty lights. All the...

Bang! He opened his eyes. He looked down at the plate of food, confused. Had he been asleep? He looked back up towards where everyone was dancing and frowned. Everything had changed. Everything was suddenly sinister. The music had changed. It had become dark, distorted, quiet and spooky. And his friends had changed. They were dancing, but so slowly. Their movements were all strange and jerky, as if they were puppets on strings rather than people. Luke pushed through them and approached Clyde and Rani. They had their backs to him.

'Clyde?' he said. 'Rani?'

They turned around and Luke jumped back. They had big, terrifying grins on their faces. Their eyes were dark, as if

they were possessed. As he jumped back, he felt himself hitting something. He turned around.

A tall, dark figure was standing there, looking down at the floor. Luke looked at him, confused. Then he saw the man's hands. They were pale and white and one of them held a blood-red flower.

Luke backed away as the man looked up. His face was painted white, like his hands. His hair was weird and spiky. His eyes were dark and black tears were flowing from them. He was a big man who towered over Luke. And he was smiling.

'Hello, Luke.'

Luke gagged. The man's breath was horrible. It smelled of death and decay. The man looked over Luke's shoulder at Clyde and Rani.

'They'll all be my children soon.'

'Who are you?' asked Luke, trying to hide his fear.

'I'm the Nightmare Man,' the man replied. 'And you belong to me.'

Luke shook his head. 'But, but, what are you doing here? You're in the real world!'

The Nightmare Man turned and nodded towards the table of food. Luke looked over and saw himself, sitting there, fast asleep.

'I've got to wake up!' he whispered.

'I'll let you. This time,' replied the Nightmare Man. 'Oh, but you won't tell anyone about me, will you?'

'What?'

'I'm not asking you, I'm telling you,' he continued. 'Your dreams are giving me such power. Power over you, Luke.'

Suddenly, the Nightmare Man reached up and touched Luke's face. The boy flinched as the cold, white hand brushed against his cheek. He tried to move, but he couldn't. He stared up at the Nightmare Man with wide, terrified eyes.

'You can't say my name. You can't tell anyone about me. I'm in your head, Luke. You're mine. And your dreams are going to get so much worse and give me so much power and... oh, your fear is delicious!'

And he grabbed Luke's arm and suddenly Luke...

Woke up. He looked around and everything had returned to normal. Everyone was dancing and having a great time. Clyde and Rani, noticing his look of confusion, came over.

'Oi, oi, you been asleep?' asked Clyde.

'I dunno,' Luke replied. He smiled, not wanting to freak out his friends.

Rani, though, could see that Luke wanted to talk. 'Oh, is that more cake?'

'Ooh, where?' asked Clyde, running off.

'Did you have another nightmare?' asked Rani.

'Yeah,' Luke replied. 'There was this...'

He tried to say the words. He tried to tell her about the man. The Nightmare Man. But he couldn't! He kept trying to say the words but they stuck in his throat, choking him! He gasped.

'I can't say it, Rani,' he whispered. 'I can't!'

'You're really scared, aren't you?' she replied, her voice full of concern. 'Listen, it's just a nightmare because you're stressed out about Friday. You're going to be okay.'

'But...' began Luke.

Rani grabbed his hand and pulled him to his feet. 'Come on. Let's show Clyde how it's done.'

Tired, scared and embarrassed, Luke smiled weakly as they danced.

#### **Chapter Nine**

#### Time for bed...

The rest of the party had gone well, but Luke was so tired and so scared that he'd had to leave early. When he'd got in, he'd tried to tell Sarah Jane about what had happened – but again, he'd been unable to say the words 'Nightmare Man'. Like Rani, his mum had just thought he was scared because he was having nightmares. But Luke knew there was more to it than that.

He was lying in bed, sending an email to his old friend Maria Jackson. Maria had been the first human being he'd ever seen. She had rescued him from the Bane and introduced him to Sarah Jane. She used to live on Bannerman Road in what was now Rani's house. A few years before, she and her dad had moved to Washington in America. They still spoke once or twice a week.

Maria used to help Sarah Jane rescue lost aliens and now she was doing the same in America. If nobody else could help him, Luke knew that Maria would. He was halfway through typing the email.

"There was a creature and he called himself the..."

He moved his hand to type the letter N, but something stopped him. He stared in horror as his hand refused to move! As tears welled up in his eyes, he heard the Nightmare Man's voice echoing in his mind.

'You can't say my name. You can't tell anyone about me. I'm in your head, Luke. You're mine.'

He couldn't even type the creature's name! He lay there, trying to think of some way he could tell someone, anyone, about what was happening to him when, again, echoing in his mind, he heard the Nightmare Man's voice. He was humming a lullaby. Luke recognised it as the world's most famous lullaby by the German composer Johannes Brahms. Luke started to panic, feeling the lullaby surrounding him. He could feel it making him sleepy, but he didn't want to go to sleep. He didn't want to meet the Nightmare Man again. But there was nothing he could do. The Nightmare Man's lullaby made his eyes slowly close and...

He was in the attic. Alone. Still in his pyjamas.

'Hello?' he called out, quietly.

The door was flung open and Sarah Jane, Clyde and Rani entered. With them was a young boy. He looked to be about 12 or 13 and he was small, with dark hair and a pleasant, open face. Like everyone when they first entered the attic, he was looking around in shock and wonder. Clyde stepped forward and called out.

'Mr Smith,' he said dramatically. 'I need you!'

The boy's eyes widened even more as, with his usual fanfare, Mr Smith appeared.

'Mum?' said Luke. It was like they couldn't see or hear him. 'Anyone?'

'What do you think, Josh?' asked Sarah Jane. 'Do you like it?'

The boy, Josh, nodded.

'Aw, he's so sweet,' said Rani.

'He's my new baby boy!' said Sarah Jane.

'Sarah Jane,' said Mr Smith. 'I'm receiving a call from Luke.'

Sarah Jane just grinned and hugged Josh. 'Oh, take a message. I've got Josh now.'

Luke stared at them. He knew it wasn't true. He knew it was just a nightmare, but it was so horrible. He just wanted it to stop.

'Aw, have they forgotten about you already?'

Luke heard the Nightmare Man's voice. Then he spun around as he felt the cold, dead hand grabbing his shoulder and –

Suddenly, they were outside! It was pitch black, except for a bonfire that was burning in the middle of the garden. Luke walked over to it. He realised he was still in his pyjamas, but he wasn't cold. This meant that this wasn't real. Logically, there was no need to be frightened or upset because this wasn't real. After all, what else could the Nightmare Man show him? Nothing could be worse than what he'd already seen.

He saw Clyde and Rani approaching. Both had their arms full but Luke couldn't see what they were carrying. Then, the light from the fire showed him. They were carrying his stuff. His schoolwork. His photos. Even his quilt and pillows. Everything that belonged to him.

And they started to throw it on to the fire. Luke stared, heartbroken, as the photos melted and his schoolwork burned. Rani then revealed his old teddy bear. The one his mum had given to him even though he was already too old for it. Rani smiled and threw it on the fire. Then she turned to look at Clyde.

'You getting rid of that as well?'

Luke stared, horrified, as Clyde revealed a drawing of him and Luke. It was one of the first pieces of art Clyde had ever shown the others. It meant so much to all of them.

'Yeah,' Clyde shrugged. 'It's all over, isn't it?

And slowly and deliberately, he tore the picture up and threw the bits on the fire.

'Please,' whispered Luke. 'Stop this...'

But it wasn't over yet. He watched as Sarah Jane and Josh left the house and joined them at the fire. She was carrying a photograph in a frame. It was of her and Luke. Both of them were grinning at the camera. They didn't just

look like mother and son. They looked like friends. Best friends.

'Bye, Luke,' she said, her voice so cold.

And she threw the photograph onto the fire. Luke watched, tears in his eyes, as the glass cracked and the frame started to burn. The photograph began to bubble and melt.

Then, holding her hands out, Sarah Jane led the others back into the house. Luke was left, standing there, watching his life burn.

Suddenly, he sensed something cold and evil. He shivered.

'What are you?' he asked, without looking up. He knew that the Nightmare Man was standing on the other side of the fire.

'I'm in every nightmare. Always behind you. Feeding on your fear.'

Luke finally tore his eyes away from the fire. He looked up at the Nightmare Man. Through the smoke he could see the creature's face. It was smiling. This made Luke so angry.

'What do you want? Why are you doing this to me?'

'Because of your mind! Because of how the Bane made you! You've so much potential, Luke.'

Luke moved around the fire and started to advance towards the Nightmare Man. He was just a bully and Luke had stood up to bullies before.

'But what do you want?' he shouted.

'Life. Your nightmares, your fear, they're giving me such power. One more little nightmare from you, and I'll be in your world.'

Luke stopped and stared up at him. He was still smiling. The flames from the fire were reflected on his rotting teeth.

'You can't!'

The Nightmare Man took a step towards Luke, towering over him.

'I'll send everyone into an eternal sleep. A whole world of nightmares for me to feast upon. And I'll just get stronger and stronger and oh, it's going to be so good.' He started to giggle. 'And it's all because of you, Lukey.'

Luke was really freaked out now, but he was determined not to let this thing destroy him.

'Where are you from?'

The Nightmare Man stopped laughing. He looked surprised at the question.

'What planet are you from?' demanded Luke.

The Nightmare Man looked down at him and sneered. 'I'm from nowhere. I'm from everywhere. Under the bed. In your wardrobe. Hiding in the shadows.' Then he whispered. 'I'm a monster.'

Luke shook his head. 'I don't believe in monsters. You're just an alien and I've stopped aliens before.'

'But wouldn't it be terrifying if I was so much more than that?'

Luke backed away. He knew that the creature was just an alien. He had to be. Luke didn't believe in ghosts or demons or anything like that. There had to be a rational explanation.

'Get ready for the end of the world, Luke.' The Nightmare Man reached out and stroked Luke's cheek. He smiled as he continued. 'An eternal sleep of nightmares and it's all your fault.'

Luke woke up. And he lay there in bed. With the light on. And he started to cry.

### **Chapter Ten**

### Thursday

The next day, Luke went downstairs and met his mum in the living room.

'Morning,' she said, cheerfully.

'I had another dream,' he replied.

Sarah Jane frowned. She hated seeing her son so upset. 'What happened?'

'I...I can't say.'

She wrapped her arms around him and gave him a hug. 'You're scared. It's just your mind playing tricks on you.'

Luke took a deep breath then stepped back. 'What if I wasn't leaving home? Would that stop it?'

She stared at him, her heart breaking. 'Oh, Luke, I'd love to say yes. I'd love to say "don't go, stay here", but I can't. You can't not do something because you're scared.'

'It's more than that!'

'I'm sure it feels like that, but it isn't,' she replied, gently. 'I've had nightmares about you going. I bet Clyde and Rani have as well. You know how much we're going to miss you but...sometimes, you have to be brave. And you're so brave and so clever. Trust me. The nightmares will stop.'

He nodded, unable to speak.

'Now, come on,' she said with a smile. 'Everyone's coming round later, so you've got to finish packing!'

Luke nodded and left the living room.

Sarah Jane sat down and tried to stay calm. She needed to be strong for Luke. Of course he was scared. She

remembered when she had first left home and how terrified she'd been. But he needed to do it. Everything would be all right in the end.

Luke's last day on Bannerman Road went by really quickly. He finished packing and both he and Sarah Jane had a little cry as they stood in his bedroom, surrounded by boxes. Then they cheered themselves up by getting the house ready for his party.

'Two parties in one week,' she said, as they blew up balloons. 'Don't ever think you're not going to be missed!'

And the party was truly fantastic. Everyone was there. Clyde and his mum, Carla. Rani and her parents, Gita and Haresh. Sarah Jane's oldest friend, Sir Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart and his wife, Doris. Professor Celeste Rivers and Toby from the Pharos Institute. Lucy Skinner and her dad from the Tycho Project. Martha Smith-Jones and her husband, Mickey. All people Luke had been through so much with. Maria and her dad sent a holographic message over from America so it was like they were there as well. It really was the greatest party ever.

But Luke wasn't enjoying it. He was so tired and so scared. People tried to ask him what was wrong, but he couldn't say, so they just assumed he was overwhelmed by the party and scared about leaving.

Like all good parties, it eventually came to an end and by 11 p.m., it was just Sarah Jane, Clyde, Rani and Luke. The gang. Rani had been filming the party on her digital camera and now she was pointing the camera at Luke and Clyde.

'Here's to Luke's last night on Bannerman Road,' she said.

Luke smiled weakly into the camera.

'You all right, mate?' asked Clyde.

'You'd tell us if something was wrong, yeah?' said Rani.

'You're going to be fine,' said Sarah Jane. 'This time tomorrow, you're going to be in a mad, new, exciting place.' She went over and took the camera from Rani. 'Come on, all of you together.'

Rani joined the two boys and she and Clyde pulled faces.

'Aw, nice smiles!' said Sarah Jane.

Clyde and Rani smiled properly and Luke tried to, but he just felt so overwhelmed by everything.

'It's going to be brilliant,' Rani was still babbling.

'He'll forget about us!' said Clyde, laughing. 'I'm telling you!'

Everyone was laughing. Except for Luke. He was just thinking about the Nightmare Man. The creature's voice kept echoing in his mind.

'One more little nightmare from you, and I'll be in your world.'

He needed to find a way to stop him. But how could he when he couldn't even tell anyone about him?

#### Later...

Luke was sitting on his bed. Clyde and Rani were on beanbags on the floor. Empty crisp packets and chocolate bar wrappers were scattered around them. Clyde had fallen asleep and Rani was filming him.

She yawned. 'You'll let me visit you in Oxford, won't you?'

'Of course I will,' Luke replied.

Rani smiled and yawned again. She snuggled deeper into the beanbag.

'Don't go to sleep.' Luke's voice was barely a whisper. 'Please.'

'I'm not,' Rani muttered. 'I'm just resting my eyes.'

But, as Luke watched, she fell asleep. He was alone. He looked over at the clock as the display changed to 00:00. It

was midnight. It was Friday. Today was the day he was meant to be leaving home. But he knew...he knew he wasn't going to university. He knew that the Nightmare Man was waiting for him and that he was going to come to get his friends and his mum and everyone.

And then Luke looked down at Rani. She was still holding the digital camera. He stared at the camera, an idea forming in his mind...

### **Chapter Eleven**

### Luke's message

'Our world has always been full of nightmares. Creatures and aliens who want to destroy us. But we've always been protected. The Doctor. His friends. My mum. But tonight I don't think anyone can save us.'

Up in the attic, Luke had settled down on the sofa. He was holding the digital camera in front of him. The Nightmare Man had said that Luke couldn't tell anyone about him. Well, talking to a camera wasn't telling anyone. It was just a machine.

Luke stared into the camera and continued talking. He told it about how the nightmares had begun. He spoke of what the Nightmare Man had told him. He told the camera everything. And as he was doing this, he heard the distant humming of Brahms' *Lullaby*. The Nightmare Man was getting closer. He wanted Luke to fall asleep. Luke knew that if he did, the Nightmare Man would escape.

'So, that's what happened. That's why I'm up here now, trying so hard to stay awake.'

'But you can't. I'm coming, Luke. It's time to go to sleep...'

'No...please...' Luke begged. But he could already feel his eyes closing.

'Sweet dreams,' whispered the Nightmare Man.

Finally, Luke's eyes closed. For a moment, there was silence. Then, suddenly, Luke's body started to convulse! His mouth fell open and what looked like black smoke started to

pour out of him. The smoke was alive and it writhed around the attic before finally merging into a man-sized shape. There was a loud rumble of thunder as the smoke cleared and there, in the attic, appeared the Nightmare Man. Tall and pale and evil. He looked at his hands, as if seeing them for the first time.

'I'm real!' he said. 'I'm here and I'm real!'
He looked down at Luke's body and he started to laugh.
Elsewhere...

Luke opened his eyes and he blinked. Where was he? For a moment, he couldn't remember what had happened. He looked around, but everything was dark. He moved to try and find the light switch, but then he remembered...he'd seen this darkness before. Through the doorway in the corridor. It was where the Nightmare Man had been standing. It was his home. It was darkness. It was a black void. It was cold and terrifying and there was no way out.

'Please! Can anyone hear me? Let me out!'

But Luke Smith was alone. All alone in the Nightmare Man's world.

### **Chapter Twelve**

## Terror at night

Sarah Jane lay on her bed and yawned. She was tired, but she couldn't sleep. She glanced over at her clock. It was nearly 1 a.m.

'This is silly,' she muttered to herself. She switched on her bedside lamp and reached over for her book. Then she remembered that she had left it in the attic. She sighed, got up and pulled on a dressing gown. Then she left her room and started to climb the stairs towards the top of the house.

In the attic, the Nightmare Man was relishing being alive. He was like a child, swinging from the beams and jumping over the desks. He looked at Luke's unconscious body and started to laugh again. Then, he heard the sound of footsteps coming up the stairs.

'Night, night,' he whispered, with a giggle, before fading away.

The door opened and Sarah Jane entered. She jumped as she saw Luke, apparently asleep on the sofa. Then she smiled. At least tonight he was getting some sleep, even if he wasn't in bed. She found a blanket and pulled it over him. He looked so peaceful. She saw the discarded digital camera on the floor next to him and went to pick it up. Luke's last night on Bannerman Road...she smiled. It would be good to see the party again. Sitting down, she pressed rewind and then play on the camera. And she smiled as she

watched the guests from earlier. It really had been a lovely evening.

Back in Luke's bedroom, Clyde and Rani were still fast asleep. Which is why they didn't see the Nightmare Man step out of the wall. He looked down at them and smiled. They were going to be the first of so many...

Sarah Jane was smiling as she watched the video of Clyde snoring. She hoped Clyde and Rani would still come round to visit her after Luke left.

Then the screen went dark and there was a burst of static. Suddenly, Luke's face filled the frame.

'I need to tell you about the Nightmare Man...'

The Nightmare Man stood over Clyde and Rani and waved his hand over them.

'Eeny, meeny, miny, moe. Catch a tiger by the toe. If he squeals, let him go. Eeny, meeny, miny -'

His hand stopped over Rani. He smiled down at her.

Sarah Jane watched the video in shock. She watched as Luke fell asleep. She watched as the black smoke came out of him. And she watched as the Nightmare Man appeared in the attic. She dropped the camera and ran over to Luke.

'Luke! It's your mum! Wake up!'

In Luke's bedroom, the Nightmare Man placed his hand on Rani's forehead. He shuddered.

'Oh, what sweet dreams. Soon change that...'

He stood back from her and clasped his hands together. There was an unearthly crackling sound and black smoke started to appear around his hands – he was creating pure nightmare energy! He reached down and touched Rani's forehead again. She started to whimper as the nightmare energy entered her.

'Please, Luke!'

Sarah Jane was almost hysterical. She couldn't wake Luke no matter how hard she shook him.

She turned and screamed out. 'Mr Smith, I need you!' And as Mr Smith opened, she continued shouting. 'K-9! K-9, where are you?'

She started to shake Luke again. 'It's your mum! Wake up!'

Sarah Jane's voice was echoing throughout the house. The Nightmare Man smiled.

'Voices crying out in the night...'

He looked down at Rani as she started to flinch.

'Aw,' he said with a grin. 'Is someone else about to have a nightmare?'

### **Chapter Thirteen**

### A world of nightmares

Rani Chandra yawned as she opened her eyes. She was on the sofa in her living room. In the background, she could hear a reporter reading the news. She must have dozed off in front of the telly. Stretching as she woke up properly, she looked around for the remote control.

'Questions were asked in Parliament today about the Prime Minister's handling of...'

Rani found the remote and switched off the telly. She yawned again. Suddenly, the TV switched itself back on. The same newsreader was sitting in the same BBC news studio.

'Oh, well, that's nice,' said the newsreader.

Rani blinked. What an odd thing for a newsreader to say, she thought. She switched the television off again. Instantly, the newsreader re-appeared on the screen.

'No, go ahead. Switch me off.'

Rani stared at the screen. The newsreader stood up and moved in front of her desk.

'I'm talking to you, Rani,' she said.

Rani jumped off the sofa and crawled towards the television. She crouched in front of it.

'How? How are you doing that?' she whispered.

'I'm Louise Marlowe, BBC News,' replied the newsreader.

'But...you're talking to me!' said Rani.

She reached up with her hand and gently knocked the screen. It was glass. It was solid. It was a normal television.

Louise Marlowe's smile suddenly became a snarl. 'Didn't your mum ever tell you not to sit so close to the screen?'

And suddenly, impossibly, she reached through the screen and grabbed Rani's wrist! Rani started to scream and struggle.

'Get off me! Get off!'

But it was no good. The laughing newsreader just pulled her arm back into the television – taking a screaming Rani with her. Rani was pulled right through the screen!

The Chandras' living room fell silent as the television set switched off.

In Luke's bedroom, the Nightmare Man was grinning down at Rani. He could taste her fear. And he loved it.

'Oh, but I need so much more!' he said. Then he looked down at Clyde. 'Oh, hello...'

Sarah Jane was crouched next to Luke as K-9 scanned him.

'My sensors indicate that Master Luke is asleep.' K-9 almost sounded sorry. He knew that Sarah Jane needed more information.

'I know that,' she replied.

She spun around and looked at Mr Smith. He was examining the footage on Rani's digital camera. On his screen, an image of the Nightmare Man grinned at Sarah Jane, making her shudder.

'And what about you?' she asked Mr Smith. 'You got anything?'

'I'm scanning the alien's face and running a check through my -'

But Sarah Jane turned away from him. She was scared and she was impatient. She needed her son back.

'What's wrong with you two?' she said. 'Don't you see? That creature stopped Luke telling us about him, but oh,

he's clever. Luke didn't record the video because he was scared, but because he knew we'd find it! He knew we'd save him!'

She crouched down next to her son and stroked his face. 'Please, Luke, wake up,' she said, with tears in her eyes.

For a second there was silence in the attic. Then, Mr Smith spoke. 'I've completed my scan, Sarah Jane. Luke's Nightmare Man is a Vishclar from the Saretti dimension. There are stories throughout the universe of them attempting to break into our reality.'

Sarah Jane stood up again, full of hope. The creature was just an alien. 'Stories? So people have stopped them! How?'

'I am still searching for that information,' replied Mr Smith. Sarah Jane turned and looked at Luke again.

'Please,' she whispered. 'Please just be okay.'

### **Chapter Fourteen**

## Trapped!

Luke was alone. Completely alone. Surrounded by a black void that was neither hot nor cold. There was no up or down. No left or right. It was just darkness.

'Hello,' he said, quietly. He heard his voice echo once. Hello. Then again. Hello. And then again and again. Hello... Hello. Suddenly it was echoing faster and louder and faster and louder, surrounding him! His own voice taunting him. Hello hello hello!

'Stop it!' he shouted. But, of course, that just added to the noise.

He started to panic, started to run. He couldn't see where he was going. There was no floor, no ceiling, no walls. It was all just darkness. His echoing voice started to fade away and for a second there was silence. All Luke could hear was his own heart beating. He tried to stop panicking. There had to be a way out. He knew that he just needed to stay calm. He felt for his own hands and legs and arms. He was real. He existed. He could breathe, so there was air. This was a real place. He just needed to be logical.

And that's when the real terror started. Again, it was just noise, but it was so much noise. Metallic voices screaming out the end of the world and his mum crying. It was one of his worst memories – one of his real-life nightmares! The Daleks' invasion of Earth! And there were more! Maria's voice sounded over the Daleks, saying how she was leaving for America. Her voice saying goodbye, echoing and getting

louder. The time Clyde had been possessed and had been made to forget who Luke was. His best friend calling him a freak. The voices were overlapping, getting louder and louder. It was terrifying!

Luke started to panic, his breathing getting faster and faster. Suddenly, there, in the distance, he could see one of the blood-red doors from his nightmare. He had no choice. He ran towards it. Anywhere had to be better than here! He reached the door and pushed through it. As it slammed shut behind him, he realised he was in the nightmare school corridor. All grey. All twisted. Children's laughter taunted him, as did the sound of his mum humming Brahms' *Lullaby*. The voices from his real-life nightmares mingled with the laughter and the lullaby.

'It's not real...' he whispered to himself.

But the endless noise just got louder...

In the attic, Sarah Jane was searching through a box of alien objects. 'We've got to find a way to talk to him!'

She held up what looked like an ordinary piece of concrete. It was actually all that remained of an alien invader who'd tried to take over the people of Chiswick by disguising itself as a bridge. It had been telepathically controlling people. Sarah Jane and the gang had managed to defeat it and now...she looked at the rock. Through a small crack, she could see alien wires. There had to be some way they could...

Sarah Jane stopped. She put down the rock. She stood there, frozen.

'Mistress?' asked K-9. He could sense her fear levels rising.

'I forgot,' she whispered, appalled at herself. 'Clyde and Rani...'

She'd just remembered that they hadn't gone home after the party! She'd been so scared about Luke that she

hadn't thought about them. They were in the house and so was the Nightmare Man!

She started to run.

In Luke's bedroom, the Nightmare Man was resting his hand against Clyde's forehead.

'Oh, yes, bring on the nightmares...' he said, smiling.

And Clyde blinked. For a moment he couldn't remember where he was. He looked around, taking in his surroundings. He was in a burger bar but, strangely, it looked like he was working there! He was wearing a horrible pink uniform and he was holding a spatula. But he didn't work in a burger bar. He knew he didn't.

'Hello?' he called out. 'Anyone there?'

Suddenly, there was a whirring noise from the main doorway. Clyde looked over and there, on an old lady's mobility scooter, was an old lady. She had old lady clothes and old lady hair. And there was something wrong about her. Something broken. She smiled as she drove her scooter towards the counter where Clyde was working.

Clyde let out a small yelp as he suddenly realised who she was. She looked older and she looked strange, but it was her. It was Sarah Jane Smith!

'You still serving burgers?' she said. 'I always knew you were a stupid boy.'

Clyde just stared at her, horrified. How could this have happened?

In Luke's bedroom, the Nightmare Man was laughing as he fed on Clyde's fear and confusion. He could feel Rani's terror as well. Two children already under his spell and a whole world waiting...

'Oops,' he said to himself, laughing, as he heard Sarah Jane rushing towards the bedroom. He took a step back, then simply stepped through the wall.

The door burst open and Sarah Jane ran in. 'Clyde! Rani! Wake up!'

She continued shouting their names as she crouched down and started to shake them. But they wouldn't wake up. She was too late. Sarah Jane looked at Rani, blinking back tears.

'I'm sorry...'

Rani blinked as bright lights suddenly surrounded her. She looked around, confused. Where was she? What happened? She had a vague memory of being on the sofa in her living room. She could remember the TV was on. A newsreader. She gasped as suddenly she remembered. She'd been pulled into the television! She looked up and let out a scream as she saw the newsreader, Louise Marlowe, standing over her.

'What are you?' she asked.

The newsreader smiled. 'Louise Marlowe, BBC News.'

Rani's eyes started to adjust to the brightness and she realised where she was. It was a television studio. It was the BBC News studio. In front of her was a camera, and behind that, it was just darkness. The bright studio lights were shining down onto her and Louise. And behind them was the newsdesk.

'This can't be happening!' said Rani, shaking her head.

The newsreader reached out a hand. 'Breaking news, Rani. I need you.'

'What do you mean?' Rani shivered as Louise reached down and touched her hair. Then she looked down and saw that her clothes had changed. She was wearing a smart newsreader's suit – just like Louise. She stood up and felt her hair. That had changed as well. She was a newsreader! She

looked around at the cameras and lights. 'But I shouldn't be here! I don't know what I'm doing!'

'You are a journalist, aren't you?' asked Louise.

'I don't understand!'

Louise smiled gently. 'Come and sit down.'

She led Rani round behind the desk and they both sat down. Rani stared out at the dark studio.

'What am I meant to say?' she asked.

'Duh!' replied Louise, pointing at the camera.

Above the camera was an autocue. It was like a computer screen, showing the newsreaders what they had to say. Rani started to read it.

'Her name is...' She stopped. 'Sarah Jane?'

Louise, her fellow newsreader, smiled at her. It wasn't a nice smile.

'You and me, Rani. We're going to tell everyone who she is. We're going to destroy Sarah Jane Smith!'

Sarah Jane entered the attic. She was scared and alone but, most of all, she was devastated about Luke, Clyde and Rani.

'I can't wake them up,' she muttered.

For one of the first times in her life, she felt like giving up. She just didn't know what to do.

'Sarah Jane,' said Mr Smith, his voice surprisingly gentle. 'You still have the sentient concrete.'

She walked back to the table and picked it up. 'Which has electrical circuitry in it.' She started to think. She wasn't just going to give up, no matter how dark and scary the world seemed. 'K-9! Could you use this? Could you use it to talk to Luke?'

'Affirmative,' K-9 replied.

Sarah Jane, full of energy and determination, put the piece of concrete next to Luke's head. K-9's probe extended and attached to the alien device.

'Working...' said K-9.

The wires in the rock started to glow!

'Master Luke,' said K-9. 'Can you hear me? Master Luke?'

For a moment, it looked like it might work! But then the wires in the concrete stopped glowing.

K-9's head lowered. 'I regret I have insufficent power,' he said, sadly.

'Perhaps I can help?' announced Mr Smith. 'If I was connected to K-9, I could boost his energy levels.'

Sarah Jane ran back over to her box of alien objects. 'What do you need, Mr Smith? I've got stuff here from planets across the universe. Mind control devices and alien plants! Just tell me what you need!'

'I need a USB lead, Sarah Jane,' replied Mr Smith.

Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock...

In the cafe, Clyde looked up at the big clock, annoyed. It was ticking loudly but the hands on the clock weren't moving. He wanted his shift to finish so he could go home and work out what was going on. He was preparing a burger for the elderly Sarah Jane.

'Go easy on the sauce,' she screeched.

'But I don't get it!' said Clyde. 'Where's Luke?'

'Oh, he's such a clever boy. He's working for the government now, says he's going to be an astronaut!' Sarah Jane leaned forward and whispered. 'I went to space once.'

Clyde already knew this. He'd heard about Sarah Jane's adventures in time and space with the Doctor. He'd met the Doctor himself. He'd even been in the TARDIS!

'Yeah, I know,' he said. 'With the Doctor.'

'Oh, I told you?' Sarah Jane looked upset. 'I get confused. The Social reckon I'm losing it! They want to put me in a home. I told them: I've got a home, thank you very much!'

Clyde looked at her and felt his heart breaking. He'd seen this sort of thing before. A friend of his Nan's had

moved into a retirement home called "Lavender Lawns". He'd been to visit her a few times and some of the residents there were... confused. It happened to some people as they got older and it was always very sad. Clyde realised that it had happened to Sarah Jane.

'This can't be real,' he said, shaking his head. He reached over the counter and took Sarah Jane's hand. 'Where's Luke? He'll know what to do.'

'He went away and he never came back. Like the little ducks!' Suddenly Sarah Jane began to cackle. 'Quack, quack, quack!'

Clyde stared at her. How could this be happening? He looked up at the clock. Tick-tock, tick-tock.

In the nightmare school corridor, Luke was crouched up in a ball, covering his ears. Mocking laughter was echoing around him, taunting him.

'It isn't real. It isn't real. This is just a stupid dream!'

He was so close to giving up. He was so scared, so alone. What could he do? But he was brave. Luke Smith had done so much with his life that he wasn't just going to give up now. He jumped to his feet, desperately trying to ignore the laughter. And he shouted out loud. 'Nightmare Man!'

Back in the real world, the Nightmare Man was just stepping into the driveway of 13, Bannerman Road. He was jumping about, smelling flowers and feeling the bark on the trees. This was his first time in the real world and he was loving it.

'Nightmare Man!' Luke's voice sounded in his head.

'Oh, your mind is so strong,' he replied. He was genuinely impressed by Luke. 'Your mind is echoing across the dimensions.'

'Come back and face me.'

The Nightmare Man waggled his head, pretending to think about it. 'Mmm...no.'

'What's the matter?' Luke continued. 'You scared?'

The Nightmare Man knew what Luke was trying to do. He knew about the other aliens Luke had fought. The ones who would have got angry at being accused of being scared. The Nightmare Man, though, like Luke, wasn't stupid. 'I'm just happy,' he called back. 'You've taken my place and I've taken yours. You've made the monster real, Luke.'

Giggling and humming Brahms' *Lullaby*, he skipped off down the driveway and into Bannerman Road.

Luke was screaming up at the ceiling. 'No! Come back! Come back!'

But there was no reply. He was lost. Trapped and alone in the nightmare corridor.

He stopped shouting and fell to his knees. He realised that there was nothing he could do. There was no hope. The Nightmare Man had won.

### **Chapter Fifteen**

# The longest night

Luke Smith might have given up all hope but his mum certainly hadn't! She was running between Mr Smith and K-9, checking that the USB cable was attached properly.

'Ready?' she asked.

'Ready,' replied her robot dog.

'Ready,' replied her huge alien supercomputer.

And Mr Smith started to power up. On his screen, an image of K-9 appeared, getting brighter and brighter. Sparks crashed and flashed across Mr Smith as he transferred power over to K-9. The lights in the attic flickered as he started taking electrical power from the whole house. All the power he could find was flowing through him and into K-9. It was more power than either of them had used before, but it was necessary if it meant K-9 could talk to Luke in a different dimension. Sarah Jane stared at K-9, terrified as his red eyes glowed brighter than she'd ever seen.

'K-9? Is it working?' she gasped.

'Affirmative!' he squealed.

Luke, alone and terrified in the nightmare corridor, was hugging himself. 'I can't stop him. It's just me.'

'Negative, Master Luke,' said a familiar voice. 'It is never just you.'

Luke opened his eyes and looked up. And there, in front of him, was K-9! He grinned. 'How did you get here? Did

Mum send you?'

'Affirmative,' K-9 nodded. 'She wanted me to tell you that this is a dream and that you need to wake up.'

Luke's smile fell. 'I've tried, K-9. But I can't.' He fell back against the wall. 'I was so scared about leaving home I started having nightmares. This is all my fault.'

In the attic, Sarah Jane crouched down next to K-9. 'Mr Smith?' she said, turning to the computer.

'The dog is communicating with Luke,' Mr Smith confirmed.

Sarah Jane almost cried with relief. At last, something was working. She would get the kids back and, together, they would stop the Nightmare Man!

Rani was still sitting behind the desk in the news studio. The lights were bright and burning. She turned to Louise.

'Why do you want to destroy Sarah Jane?'

'Why do you think?' the newsreader replied. 'The woman's a menace to society!'

Rani stared at her, confused. 'What are you on about?' She saves the world!'

Louise dabbed at her lipstick. 'But at what cost, Rani? You, Clyde, even her own son! How many times has she put you at risk?'

'It's not like that.'

Suddenly, Louise's voice was harsh as she turned to face Rani. 'Answer the question!' She spat out the words. 'How many times have you nearly died because of Sarah Jane Smith?'

Rani shook her head. She didn't know what to say. She was so scared. 'I don't understand what's happening.'

Louise calmed down. 'You're just a child, Rani. It's not your fault. But if we don't expose her, she's going to get you

killed.'

'No, she's given me a better life,' replied Rani. 'She's my friend.'

Louise was suddenly harsh again. 'Oh, grow up! If you're going to be a journalist, you've got to stop worrying about people's feelings. Don't you want to be a journalist?'

Rani nodded, terrified.

'Then there's nothing wrong with us telling the world! The public have a right to know, Rani. And it's your responsibility as a journalist to tell them!'

Rani stared into the TV camera. She was terrified. She didn't know what to say, or what to do. And she was even more terrified because what Louise Marlowe was saying was starting to make sense!

Sarah Jane was now parked against one of the tables. Clyde brought over her burger and sat down.

'I don't want this,' he said. 'I mean, I was doing my art. I was good at it. Wasn't I?'

Sarah Jane gave him a cold smile. 'Oh, you are sweet.'

Clyde shook his head. He knew that wasn't true. 'I'm not stupid!'

'You were never as good as my Luke,' Sarah Jane replied. 'That's why you ended up here.'

Clyde couldn't believe what he was hearing. It wasn't true. Yes, Luke was cleverer but that didn't mean he was stupid. They had different skills and abilities and they both worked hard. He stared at the old woman sitting opposite him. Sarah Jane was someone who had always taken him seriously. She'd always said that he could do whatever he wanted to do, that he could be whoever he wanted to be.

'You'd never say that,' he muttered.

'What do you mean, dear?'

He stood up, strong and determined. 'This isn't a burger bar. These aren't real burgers, and you're not the real Sarah lane.'

He left her and walked calmly to the door. He tried to pull it open but it wouldn't budge. For the first time, he looked through the windows and saw that it was completely black outside. He should have been scared, but at least it proved that this wasn't real.

'Oh, Clyde,' cackled the old woman. 'There's no way out.'

He glared at her. There was no way he was going to give up. He wasn't scared. He wasn't!

Back in the real world, though, and the Nightmare Man knew that Clyde was lying to himself. The boy was terrified and the Nightmare Man was loving it.

He strode down Bannerman Road, sensing all the sleeping men, women and children. Gaining yet more and more power from Luke's nightmares, he held his arms up into the air.

'Sweet dreams!' he yelled, into the night sky.

And suddenly black smoke – pure nightmare energy – shot out of his hands and into the air. It circled the road, entering houses, bedrooms, minds.

'This whole world will fall into an eternal sleep!' laughed the Nightmare Man. 'A sleep of nightmares for me to feast on!'

His laughter echoed up into the sky and across the city.

In the nightmare corridor, K-9 was trying to comfort Luke. He hadn't been designed to comfort people so he wasn't doing a good job. He nudged Luke again.

'Please, Master Luke.'

Luke just stared at him, his eyes wet with tears. 'I wish Clyde and Rani were here. They always know what to do.'

'Master Clyde and Mistress Rani are asleep,' replied K-9. 'They will not wake up.'

Luke wanted to scream. 'So, he's got them. They're gone...'

It was all over. Everything. The world was going to end and it was all his fault. He turned away from K-9 and then... suddenly he stopped and he thought about what K-9 had just said.

'I'm here. I'm having a nightmare and I'm here. Maybe they are as well?

He stood up. It had to be worth a try!

'Clyde? Can you hear me? Rani?'

In the news studio, Rani was staring, horrified, at the camera. She could hear the BBC News theme tune. A man somewhere was counting down. This was happening! She was about to expose Sarah Jane on the national news!

'3...2...1...and action!'

'I'm Louise Marlowe,' said the woman sitting next to her.

Rani tried not to say it. She tried to stay silent, but she couldn't. 'And I'm Rani Chandra.' She turned to Louise. 'Please, don't make me do this.'

But Louise just continued reading the words on the autocue. 'A woman. Living on a typical suburban street in London. Her name...' She paused. It was Rani's turn to speak.

Rani was close to tears. 'Sar...Sar...'

'What's her name?' demanded Louise. 'Say her name, Rani! Say it!'

'Sarah Jane Smith,' cried Rani. 'Her name is Sarah Jane Smith.'

She felt terrible. How could she do this? What was happening?

'Rani!'

She looked up. Who was calling her name? It sounded like Luke.

'Luke? Is that you?'

'It's not real. It's a nightmare!'

Rani almost laughed. 'I knew it! I knew it wasn't real!'

Louise turned to her. 'Stay with me, Rani!'

Rani stood up and moved in front of the desk. She yelled into the black void behind the cameras. 'How do I wake up? How do I get out of here, Luke?'

K-9 turned to Luke. 'She needs a way out, Master Luke.'

Luke looked up and down the corridor. 'She needs a door!' He looked at the red doors and grinned. 'Clyde!'

'Clyde, can you hear me?'

Luke's voice suddenly sounded in Clyde's mind as he tried to find a way out of the burger bar.

'Clyde!'

He stopped and looked up. 'Luke! Thank God! Where are you?'

'I'm going to get you out of there. Hold on.'

Luke stood in the middle of the corridor, shouting into thin air.

'Both of you, listen. I'm in a corridor, and there's loads of doors. I need you to concentrate. Imagine there's a door and I'm on the other side.'

'But where are you?' called Rani.

'Rani?' called Clyde.

'Clyde?' called Rani.

'We're in different nightmares, but we're talking to each other?' asked Clyde.

'Listen to me!' Luke needed them to pay attention. 'Think of...think of a classroom door! Like the ones at school.

You've got to imagine it. Do you understand?'

In their nightmares, both Rani and Clyde started to concentrate. Other people might have argued or felt silly but they instantly trusted Luke. So they both stood there, staring into space. Concentrating. Trying to make doors appear.

In the corridor, Luke was clenching his fists and concentrating on two of the doors. Behind them, he was sure he could see a distant light flickering. 'I think it's working!' he shouted.

In the news studio, Rani continued focusing. She would make a door appear, she would!

Then, in front of her, a red classroom door started to appear!

In the burger bar, Clyde was staring into thin air.

'Come on! Come on!' he shouted.

And in front of him, a red classroom door started to appear!

In the corridor, the light behind the two doors was getting stronger. Luke knew these two doors were connecting to Clyde and Rani's nightmares.

'That's it!' he shouted. 'Nearly there!'

Rani gasped with relief as the door became solid. She moved towards it, when suddenly a hand gripped her arm.

'Breaking news,' snarled Louise Marlowe. 'Luke's leaving you. He's got his A-levels, he's off to university. He's leaving

you behind.'

Rani stared up at the woman's face. Louise grinned evilly at her.

'I know!' Rani suddenly shouted. She was shocked at her own admission. She was jealous of Luke leaving.

'So, why are you doing what he tells you to?' asked Louise, gently. 'Make your own choice, Rani. Stay here and your dreams of being a journalist come true.'

Rani looked around the TV news studio...

Clyde stared up at his door, ready to open it, when...

'This might not just be a dream,' whispered the twisted version of Sarah Jane. 'This could be what happens if you stay friends with Luke.'

'Don't be stupid!' Clyde replied.

'He's so much cleverer than you and you know it. He'll be coming home with all his stories about Oxford and you're going to get so jealous. Tick-tock, tick-tock.'

Clyde shook his head. 'Nah, I'm pleased for him!'

'You made a door appear,' the old woman whispered. 'Stay here and you could make money! Gold! Everything you ever wanted!'

Clyde turned to look at her...

In the corridor, Luke stared at the two doors. The light behind them was starting to fade!

'Clyde! Rani!' he called. There was no answer. 'Please!' he screamed. 'I need you!'

In the news studio, Rani pulled away from Louise.

'Breaking news,' she announced. 'I'm outta here!'
And she opened the red door and stepped through it.

In the burger bar, Clyde looked down at Sarah Jane. He took off his hat and threw it down on the table.

'I quit!' he announced.

And he opened the red door and stepped through it.

Luke almost collapsed with relief as the light behind the doors shone brightly again. The doors opened and Clyde and Rani, now in their normal clothes, ran in. The three of them just stared at each other, bemused.

'This,' announced Clyde, 'is weird.'

### **Chapter Sixteen**

### Alone in the attic

The Nightmare Man was striding down Bannerman Road. He was laughing and singing. He could feel the residents starting to fall into their nightmares and it was all because he had so much power. The power that Luke Smith and his genetically engineered brain was giving him and –

Suddenly he gasped! 'What? What is happening?'

He looked at his hands as he tried to fire more nightmare energy into the sky. Nothing happened.

'His nightmare is stopping! How?'

He reached across the dimensions, trying to feel Luke's mind and he gasped again.

'His nightmare is ending! He is not alone!'

Across the dimensions, Luke was indeed no longer alone. Clyde and Rani were with him. The gang, reunited.

'So are we all having the same dream?' asked Clyde.

'That's impossible,' said Rani, but she was smiling.

'That's amazing!' said Luke, who was also smiling.

The three of them were almost laughing with relief. As long as they were together, they didn't feel scared.

'I guess we're just that good,' joked Clyde. 'So, where are we?'

'Mr Smith told K-9 about this different dimension,' Luke replied. 'I think it's where our minds go when we dream.'

'Reminder: we need to defeat the Nightmare Man,' said K-9.

Rani looked down at the metal dog. 'The what now?'

And Luke realised that Clyde and Rani didn't even know about the Nightmare Man. Now that the creature had no hold over him, he started to tell them all about it.

In the attic, Sarah Jane was pacing back and forth. She hated feeling useless, but she knew there was nothing she could do. She kept checking things with Mr Smith. Was Luke's physical health okay? Was K-9 still communicating with him? Was he sure there was nothing she could do? Mr Smith was busy, trying to keep enough energy flowing into K-9 as well as answering Sarah Jane's questions.

They were both so preoccupied. Which is why neither of them noticed a pale, white face appear in the corner of the room. Suddenly, the Nightmare Man was there!

'No!' he shouted, pointing a finger at K-9.

Sarah Jane turned around, just in time to see the nightmare energy shoot out of the creature's hand. The energy hit K-9 who flew back, right across the attic. Sparks shot across his body as the metal dog squealed and slammed into a wall. His lights went out.

'No!' screamed Sarah Jane. 'K-9!'

But the Nightmare Man wasn't finished. He shot more of his evil energy at Mr Smith! Explosions raged across his screen as Mr Smith tried to speak. Sarah Jane could only watch in horror as the computer shut down. The lights in the attic went out.

She was alone. In the dark.

'No help for you, Sarah Jane Smith. You must be all alone,' said the Nightmare Man quietly, as he advanced on her. 'With just a little hint of moonlight on your face.'

In the corridor, Clyde, Luke and Rani were searching for K-9.

'Here, boy! Come on!' said Clyde.

Luke knew there was only one reason why K-9 would have disappeared from this dimension. 'Something must have happened to the real K-9.' His face fell. 'Mum...'

Rani rushed over to him and hugged him. 'She'll be okay. She's brilliant, your mum.'

But Luke shook his head. 'You've not seen him, Rani. You don't know what he's like.'

Luke pulled away from Rani. If the Nightmare Man was alone with his mum, she was in real danger.

In the attic, the Nightmare Man and Sarah Jane Smith were circling each other. It was so dark. Sarah Jane looked over at her unconscious son. Then she glanced at the destroyed K-9 and Mr Smith. She was terrified, but she was determined not to show it.

'It's good to meet you at last,' said the Nightmare Man, with a sinister smile.

'You know me?' asked Sarah Jane.

'I feed on every nightmare that every man, woman and child has ever had,' he replied. 'And you've had so many. The things you've seen. And Luke, your fear of what might happen to him.'

Suddenly he stopped moving and gasped with pleasure. 'Oh, and those dreams about the Doctor, when he never came back and you thought he was dead. Oh, they were good.'

Sarah Jane stopped walking. She stared up at him. 'I'm not scared of you.'

He took a step towards her, towering over her. He tilted his head, a look of intrigue on his face.

'What's the matter?' she said, with a forced smile on her face. 'Not used to someone arguing back?'

He smiled back down at her.

'Well, go on then,' she shouted. 'If you're so strong, send me to sleep.'

He started to reach out for her. His pale, white, deathly hand so close to her face. 'You want to have nightmares?'

'You've taken my son! My friends! This is already a nightmare! What else have I got live for?'

His hand was so close. He smiled.

'Come on, do it!' she screamed.

There was a pause and then he replied, his voice calm and mocking. 'You think if I send you to sleep, then you'll be able to join Luke. Oh, and I almost fell for it.'

He smiled at Sarah Jane as tears formed in her eyes.

'So what do we do?' asked Rani as Clyde came back from his search for K-9.

Luke shrugged. 'I don't know.' He looked so scared.

'It's all right,' said Rani. 'We're here.' And she took his hand.

The Nightmare Man gasped in pain! He could feel Rani taking Luke's hand. He could feel the hope it was giving him.

'Why am I wasting my time on you, old woman?' he raged. 'They're still together! I can feel them!'

And for the first time in hours, Sarah Jane smiled. 'They're together, even in their dreams. And that's what's hurting you!'

She laughed, full of hope.

'To be scared, he needs to be alone! He will be alone! Forever!'

The Nightmare Man bared his rotten teeth at her, then vanished. Sarah Jane stopped laughing.

'No! Come back! Come back!'

But she was alone.

Rani and Clyde were both comforting Luke.

'It'll be all right,' said Rani.

'It's us. We can do anything,' said Clyde.

Suddenly, there was so much noise. It was like an earthquake as the corridor seemed to be shaking itself to pieces. The three friends clutched each other, trying to stay upright. The sound of thunder and mocking laughter and Brahms' *Lullaby* rang out down the corridor. And then it stopped, as suddenly as it had started.

'You two all right?' whispered Clyde.

They both nodded, but then Rani saw something at the end of the corridor. 'There's someone there.'

Luke stepped back. 'It's him.'

And suddenly, the dark figure at the end of the corridor raised his head. It was the Nightmare Man. He started laughing as he strode towards them.

'What the hell are you?' asked Clyde. He wasn't sure why the man scared him so much, but he did.

Rani grasped Clyde's hand.

'I'm the Nightmare Man,' he replied. 'And you two are going to suffer!'

'You're just an alien,' said Rani, bravely. 'We can stop you!'

The Nightmare Man laughed. 'Remember your nightmares! Remember me!' He stared at Clyde.

Clyde was running, running for his life! Behind him, his mum was turning into a monster. Blue veins were spreading across her face. Clyde knew it wasn't real. This had happened to his dad, this wasn't real but he kept on running. He turned a corner, finding himself on Bannerman Road and there, with their backs to him, were Sarah Jane, Luke and Rani.

'Help me!' he shouted. 'Please! It's my mum!'

But he knew there was something wrong. Even before they turned around, he knew that something was wrong. They turned and he saw... blue veins working across their faces. They were turning into Berserkers. He'd seen it happen to his dad and it was his worst fear! And now it was happening to everyone!

Clyde looked up at the Nightmare Man. 'I know, I remember my nightmares. So what?'

'Remember who was behind you... Remember...'

Clyde turned around, ready to run away from his possessed friends and, just as he did, he caught a glimpse of something...a white hand, a pale mocking face...but it was gone.

'You! You were there!' Clyde was really getting scared now. 'You were in my nightmares.'

'All of them!' The Nightmare Man hissed. 'Hiding behind you, in all your nightmares!' He turned to look at Rani.

'Please, no...' she began, but he grinned down at her and she remembered.

The clock was ticking. Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock. Rani looked down at the exam paper and tried to stay calm. She'd done lots of revision, so she hoped she'd be okay.

'You'll be fine,' her dad said, smiling down at her. Then he walked to the front of the school hall. 'You may begin.'

Rani turned the exam paper over and stared at the question. She gasped in surprise. It wasn't in English! Ticktock. Tick-tock. Time was running out. She started to panic, grabbing her pen and starting to write. If she could just write something, everything would be okay. Nothing happened! There was no ink in the pen! Her answers were blank! She put her hand up!

'Dad!'

Her dad had his back to her. Tick-tock, tick-tock...

'Dad, please!'

Slowly, he turned around. Tick-tock, tick-tock...Rani screamed! He had bright red, glowing eyes and was holding a red balloon! She jumped up and backed away!

'What's happened to you?' she shouted.

'I just want to play. Come and play with me. Come and be my friend,' her dad said, smiling. He started to nod his head from side to side. Tick-tock, tick-tock...

'Daddy!' Rani screamed and turned around, ready to run and...a glimpse of a white hand, a pale mocking face...and it was gone and...

'You were there!' she stared up at the Nightmare Man, terrified. 'You were there!'

*'I'm in every dream!'* The Nightmare Man took another step towards them. 'Every nightmare.'

Suddenly he reached out and placed his cold, dead hands on their faces, stroking their cheeks. 'So you see, I'm not just an alien. I'm your worst nightmare. Remember...'

Both Clyde and Rani gasped as they remembered. Their nightmares about the monsters they'd fought, about the end of the world, about bad things happening to their friends and families...and in each one the Nightmare Man, standing there, behind them, feeding on their fear.

'You see? Do you finally understand?' The Nightmare Man started to howl with laughter. 'You're nothing. You're pathetic children, scared of the dark.' He crouched down so their faces were level. 'Scared of me!' he hissed at them.

Clyde and Rani both looked over at Luke. The Nightmare Man had separated them. Luke was alone.

'Luke! Please!' Rani called out to him. He'd met the Nightmare Man before. 'What do we do?'

But Luke was just staring, terrified. Behind Clyde and Rani, two of the red doors opened. Voices echoed out from the black voids.

The Nightmare Man kept advancing and Clyde and Rani were forced back towards the open doors.

'You're going back into your nightmares and you're going to be locked in them forever! Trapped for eternity!'

Behind her, Rani heard a voice calling out. It was Louise Marlowe. 'Breaking news, Rani. You're coming back to me!'

Behind him, Clyde also heard a voice. It was the twisted version of Sarah Jane. 'Oh, Clyde, you're so stupid!'

They both stared up at the Nightmare Man. 'Please, no!' But he just laughed and laughed. 'Night, night, kids.'

Clyde and Rani turned to look behind them. The black voids. The nightmares. Blue veins and red eyes and balloons and monsters and screaming and howling winds and thunder and noise! So much noise! Tick-tock, tick-tock! All of it, pulling them back! It was all over. They were going to be trapped in their nightmares forever! Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock ticktock tic

'No!' shouted a voice. It was Luke.

The Nightmare Man, Clyde and Rani all stopped and turned to him.

'I beg your pardon?' whispered the Nightmare Man, with a smile.

'I said, no!' repeated Luke.

'Oh, your nightmares haven't even begun.'

Luke stared at him, furious. 'Just listen to me.'

The Nightmare Man shrugged. 'Why should I?'

'Because you keep telling me about you and what you want, but you've never asked about me.'

The Nightmare Man started to laugh. 'What? What are you talking about? I'm the Nightmare Man!'

Luke took a step towards them. He held his head high, no trace of fear in his eyes. 'That's what you call yourself, but you're just an alien. Well, I'm called Luke Smith and I was made by aliens to destroy the world.'

He took another step forward. 'This brilliant woman, Sarah Jane Smith, she found me. And she made me good. And she found others. A boy called Clyde. And a girl called Rani.'

He paused and glanced at Clyde and Rani. They were just staring at him, on the verge of falling into their nightmares.

'This world has faced so many nightmares, but there's always been someone to stop them. Us!' he continued. 'Because when we're together, we can do anything. You know, I was scared because I thought my mates wouldn't be there for me.' He stopped and laughed. 'But never mind Oxford, they followed me into my nightmares! Three kids breaking down the walls of dreams to be together. Something no one's ever done before.'

He paused again and stared at his two friends. 'Because together, we're unbeatable!'

For a moment, there was silence. Then the Nightmare Man started to clap, slowly. 'Oh, very good. *But you really think words can stop a creature like me?*'

Luke suddenly grinned. 'I wasn't talking to you.'

Clyde looked at him and then looked at Rani. They both smiled.

'He's right!' said Rani.

'Together, we stop the aliens!' said Clyde.

'We stop the nightmares!' continued Rani. They pulled away from the open doors and ran towards Luke. The three of them looked up at the Nightmare Man. They weren't scared or even nervous. They were confident.

Luke took Rani's hand. The Nightmare Man gasped in pain.

'Because, when we're together...' said Luke.

He took Clyde's hand. And the Nightmare Man gasped again.

'We're not scared,' Luke continued. 'So you've no hold over us now.'

The three of them began to advance on the Nightmare Man, forcing him back towards the open doors.

Clyde grinned. 'We're brilliant when we're together.'

The Nightmare Man was gasping in pain. 'Get away from me! Get away!'

Rani blew him a kiss. 'No. You can't stop us. We're not scared.'

Luke grinned at her. 'So there we go. The boy made by aliens to destroy the world, saves the world yet again.'

The Nightmare Man screamed as he found himself being sucked in through one of the doors. 'No, please! Mercy!'

But before anyone could do anything, he was sucked into the darkness and the door slammed shut behind him.

'Oh, hello love!'

The Nightmare Man turned and jumped back in horror. He was in Clyde's burger bar and there, sitting in her scooter, was the wizened old form of Sarah Jane. The clock above them tick-tocked merrily down at him.

He turned back but the door had gone. He was trapped! In the corridor, Luke, Clyde and Rani were still holding hands as they watched the light fade behind the door.

Rani looked at Luke. 'You did it!'

He shook his head. 'We did it.' Then he took a deep breath and grinned. 'Let's get out of here.'

Clyde nodded. 'Yeah, time to wake up!'

The three of them looked at each other.

'How are we going to do that?' asked Rani. 'How do we wake up?'

Luke reached out and pinched Clyde's arm. Clyde yelped and Rani laughed and...

The corridor was empty.

The Nightmare Man was pacing up and down in the burger bar. 'No! I can't be trapped here! This can't happen to me!'

Like Clyde before him, he ran to the main doors and tried to open them. He shook them so hard, but they didn't move. 'Let me out! Children of Earth, I demand you sleep and you dream and you fear! You will fear me!'

Sarah Jane just smiled at him. 'Oh come on, come and sit down. And I'll tell you all about my brilliant son.'

The Nightmare Man turned and looked at her with disgust. 'No,' he gasped.

But Sarah Jane continued. 'His name's Luke Smith. And he's going to live happily ever after.'

And the Nightmare Man started to scream.

Sarah Jane was trying to repair K-9. Once the Nightmare Man had left her, she'd forced herself not to give up. She'd managed to get Mr Smith working and now she was attempting to fix K-9. He was only a robot dog, but he was her robot dog and, for many years, he'd been the closest thing she'd had to a real friend. She sat there, in silence, working on him. Once K-9 was up and working, then the three of them would start again. They'd find a way to rescue Luke. She wouldn't stop until they had.

'How is the -' Mr Smith began, before stopping. In a gentler tone, he continued. 'How is he?'

Sarah Jane just shook her head. 'K-9? Can you hear me?'

There was no answer. The attic was silent. She looked over at Luke. Nothing.

'What am I going to do?' she asked Mr Smith in a quiet voice.

'Mistress?' said K-9 as he suddenly started to power up.

'Oh, K-9! You're going to be okay!' And she gave him a big hug.

And then, another voice sounded behind her. 'And what about me?'

She let go of K-9, stood up and turned around. Her son was awake. Luke was awake and he was starting to stand up. She ran over to him and hugged him so hard he could barely breathe!

'Oh, thank God! I thought I'd lost you! Oh...' She started to cry.

'You're never, ever going to lose me,' Luke replied, with a smile. Then he pulled away from her, so grown up and confident. 'I'm going to check on the others.'

He ran out of the attic. Sarah Jane went to the window and saw that the sun was rising. The night was over. She turned to K-9 and smiled.

'I'm going to miss you.'

'Master Luke will be back at Christmas,' he replied.

Sarah Jane went over and sat down next to him. She rested her head on his. 'I meant you.'

'Mistress?'

'For years, you were pretty much all I had. A metal dog, looking after me,' she paused and fought back the tears. 'But you see, he's my son. And he's going off on a big new adventure and...so are you.'

K-9 understood. 'I will look after him.'

'Good dog,' said Sarah Jane. 'Good dog.'

### **Chapter Seventeen**

# A new day

'Luke, my darling! How are you?'

Luke grinned. Rani's mum, Gita, was always guaranteed to put a smile on your face. She was lovely, but also completely bonkers.

'Rani!' She called upstairs. 'Rani, Luke's here!' She turned back to him. 'You'll never guess what happened last night!'

He didn't get a chance to guess.

'Me and Haresh, we both had nightmares! Both of us! And I was talking to that Mrs Griffin down the road – you know the one with the eye – and she was saying she'd had nightmares as well! All of us! We all had nightmares! Did you?'

Luke shrugged. 'I don't really remember.'

'Rani!' Gita shouted again before continuing. 'Mine was about the toaster. It was broken, so I got a man in. Haresh is no good at technical things like that. So this man comes in, and he turns out to be a lizard! And he was chasing me right round the house! I didn't know what to do. It was quite terrifying. How are you anyway, my darling? Ready to go?'

Luke nodded. Then squeaked, as suddenly Gita wrapped her arms around him in a huge hug. 'Oh, you look after yourself, Luke. You're such a lovely boy. And don't do anything I wouldn't do.'

She pulled back and gave him a wink. Luke suspected that there wasn't much Gita Chandra hadn't done. He looked

up to see Rani coming down the stairs.

'Laters, mum,' she said, pushing past Gita and joining Luke outside.

'Laters, my darling,' Gita replied, closing the door.

Rani and Luke walked to the end of her driveway, then she linked her arm with his.

'You all set then?' she asked.

'Yeah,' he replied.

They looked both ways and crossed the road. Luke's bright yellow car was parked in the driveway. There were suitcases strapped to the roof rack, and more bags on the back seat.

'Rani,' said Luke, as they stopped outside the front door. 'Yeah?'

'In my nightmares,' he said. 'I think you were jealous of me.'

He looked at her and waited for her to deny it. There was a pause. Then she took a deep breath.

'l am.'

Luke looked shocked. 'What?'

'Of course I'm jealous. You're doing everything I want to do, but don't for one minute think I'm not pleased for you.' Suddenly she hugged him. 'I couldn't be happier.'

And Luke hugged her back.

Upstairs, in the attic, two other friends were saying goodbye to each other. Well, they denied being friends, but everyone knew the truth, really.

'Goodbye, Mr Smith,' said K-9.

'Goodbye, K-9,' said Mr Smith.

There was a pause before K-9 continued. 'You were adequate company.'

K-9 then turned to leave. He trundled towards the door.

'K-9,' said Mr Smith, suddenly.

K-9 stopped. 'Yes, Mr Smith?'

'You could always contact me. If you need to.'

If K-9 could smile, he would have had the biggest grin in the world on his face. 'I knew you would miss me,' he replied.

K-9 trundled out of the room.

'Stupid dog,' said Mr Smith. He would miss K-9 really, though.

Outside the attic, K-9 paused then, quietly, said to himself, 'I will miss you too, Mr Smith.'

Luke was standing next to the car. Clyde was standing a few metres away. They were looking at each other.

'You're going to call me, yeah?' said Clyde. 'When you get there?'

'Of course I will,' Luke replied.

'And you'll drive safely. And...' Clyde trailed off. He was no longer able to hide how he was feeling. It was obvious that he was really upset.

'I'm going to be fine,' said Luke, also fighting back tears.

'Just don't forget me, will you?' said Clyde. 'Whatever you go and do, don't forget me. I'm your best mate. Always.'

Luke grinned. 'Super alien brain, remember.' He tapped the side of his head. 'I don't forget anything.'

The two boys hugged as Sarah Jane came outside. She was carrying K-9. Rani also came out and she helped Sarah Jane put K-9 in the car. They wrapped a seatbelt around him and left the window open. Then they moved round to join Clyde and Luke. Clyde moved back and then, noticing a nod from Rani, moved further back still. Sarah Jane and Luke looked at each other.

'This is it, then,' she said. 'Start of a brand new life. New friends, new adventures, new everything.'

'Yeah,' said Luke. 'I can't believe it's happening. Today.'

She hugged him. 'I love you.'

Then she let him go and Luke got into his car. He wound the window down.

'Bye, everyone!' said Luke, starting the engine.

They all followed the car as he drove out onto the road. Luke turned to K-9. 'You ready, K-9?'

'Affirmative, Master,' the metal dog replied.

Luke took a deep breath, grinned and turned to face the road. 'Let's see what's out there!'

And he turned right, onto Bannerman Road and then onto the road out of Ealing.

Sarah Jane, Rani and Clyde didn't stop waving until he was out of sight. Then, both happy and sad at the same time, they turned to go back into 13, Bannerman Road – ready for whatever adventures were still to come.

## **Epilogue**

## Somewhere else...

Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock...

The Nightmare Man stared up at the clock. He'd already tried to break it, but it was indestructible. The sinister, elderly Sarah Jane Smith had just giggled at his frustration. She was talking about Luke. She'd been talking about Luke ever since those kids had trapped him in there. It was driving him mad!

'Because the thing about my Luke is that he never gave up. Never. He was always so brave. He found school difficult but he still went and he managed to turn it into something he loved. He was so upset when Maria Jackson left, but he moved on. They stayed in touch.' Sarah Jane took the Nightmare Man's hand again. 'Because family and friendship, it never ends. No matter where you are.'

He pulled his hand away and started hammering on the doors again.

'Of course, a creature like you, you'd never understand that, would you? You're always so alone. It's your own fault for being a bully, of course.'

'I will find a way out of here!' the Nightmare Man shouted. Again.

Sarah Jane shook her head. 'You only got out before because of Luke. Because he was made by aliens and he'd never had nightmares before. His dreams were so powerful, they released you.'

The Nightmare Man started pacing around the burger bar. 'It doesn't matter. One day, another child will have nightmares. They will have nightmares so terrifying that they will release me!' He started to laugh. 'And I will be free and I will be real!'

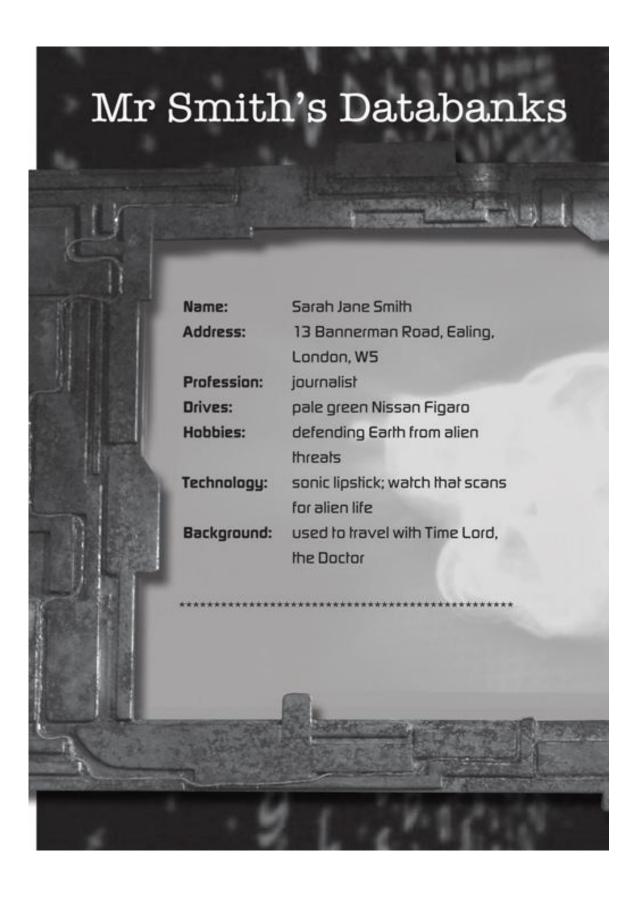
'Luke was brave,' replied Sarah Jane. 'Other children will be as well.'

'No, no, no,' the Nightmare Man said. 'One day, there will be one who won't be brave and through them I will escape this world. Now be quiet, I need to listen.'

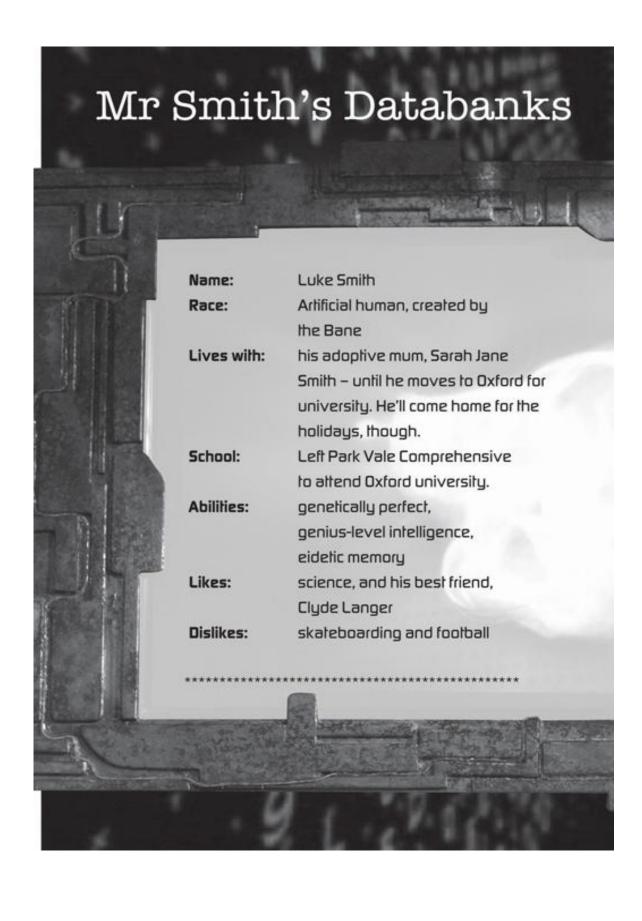
The Nightmare Man stood perfectly still. 'One night, a child will be so, so scared by their dreams. I just need to listen,' he smiled evilly. 'I need to listen out for their screams.'

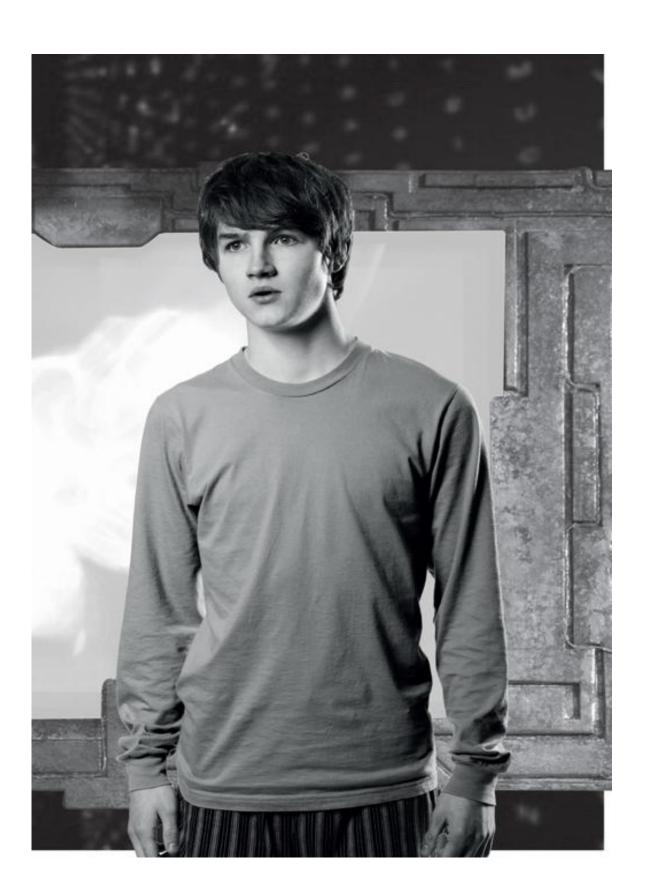
And he listened. And he waited. And he kept on waiting. Listening as the nightmare world's clock kept ticking...

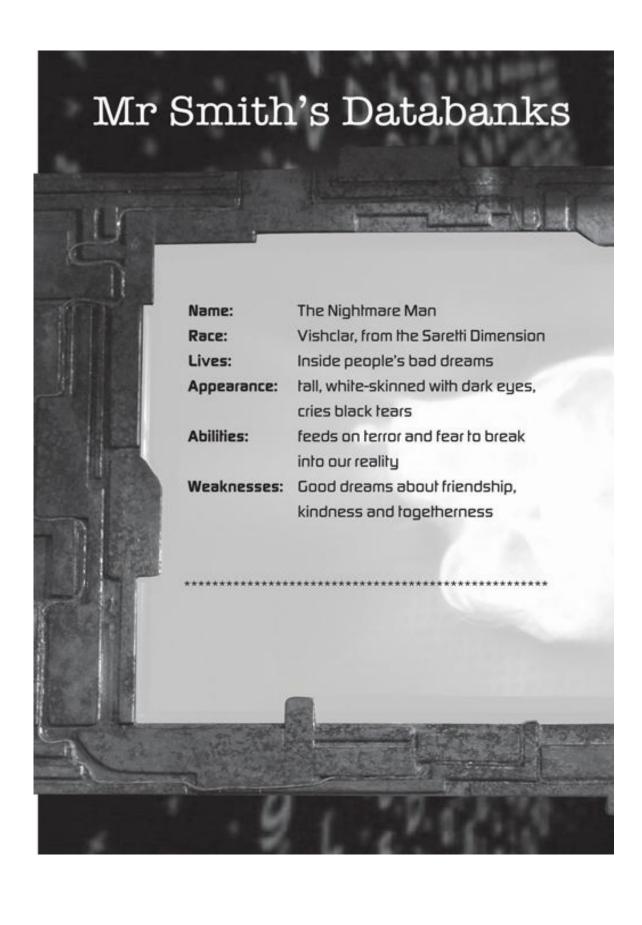
Tick-tock. Tick-tock. Tick-tock.













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# **Table of Contents**

Cover Title Page Copyright Page Contents

The Nightmare Man

Prologue: 'I'm watching...'

**Chapter One: The nightmare begins** 

<u>Chapter Two: Falling apart</u> <u>Chapter Three: Surprise!</u>

**Chapter Four: Secrets and lies** 

**Chapter Five: Tuesday** 

Chapter Six: The Nightmare Man is waiting...

<u>Chapter Seven: Wednesday</u> <u>Chapter Eight: Party of terror!</u> <u>Chapter Nine: Time for bed...</u>

**Chapter Ten: Thursday** 

<u>Chapter Eleven: Luke's message</u> <u>Chapter Twelve: Terror at night</u>

**Chapter Thirteen: A world of nightmares** 

**Chapter Fourteen: Trapped!** 

Chapter Fifteen: The longest night
Chapter Sixteen: Alone in the attic

Chapter Seventeen: A new day

**Epilogue: Somewhere else...**